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THE GEEK ISSUE!

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Neil Gaiman
and Alan Moore

50 GREAT GEEKS!
Bizarre's countdown of the planet's most distinguished dorks

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"MY MUM STOPPED ME PLAYING GAMES. SO I STABBED HER!"

10 GRISLY GEEK CRIMES!

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SEX NERDS!
GEEKY GIRLS STRIP OFF!
P75

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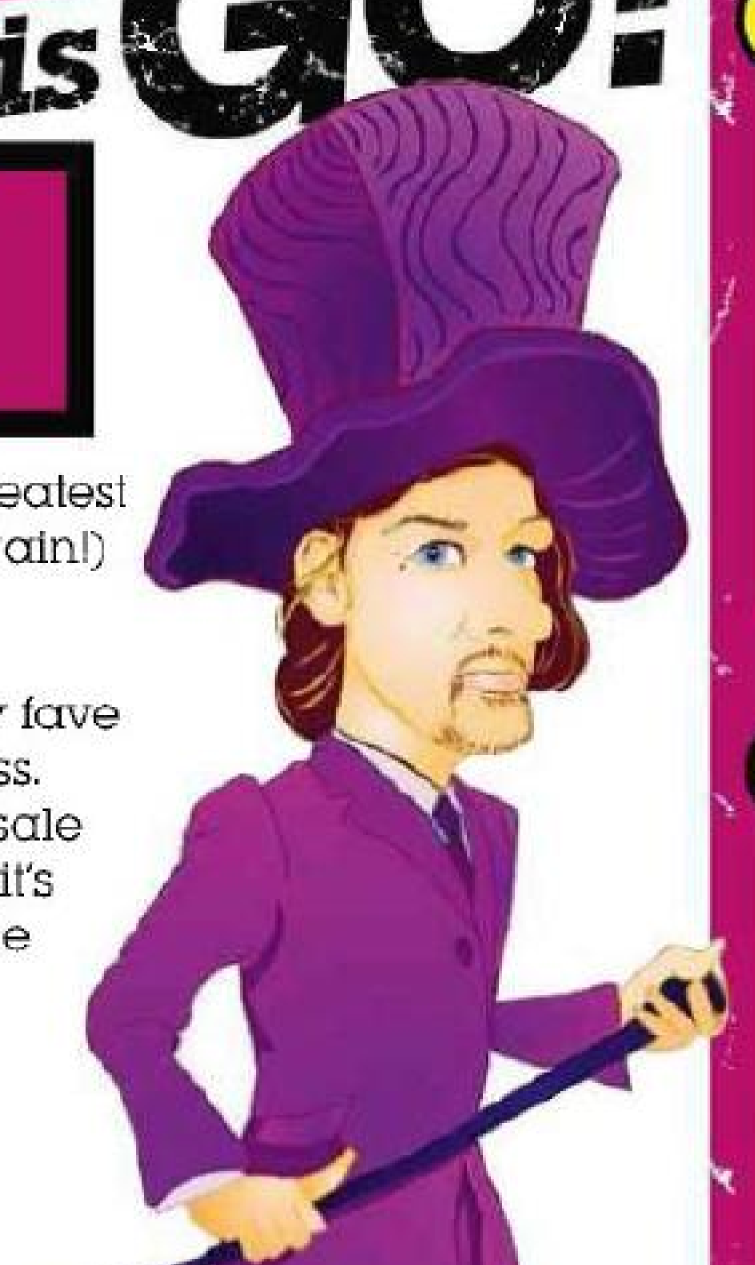
Not the editor's letter

Bizarre Ball 2011 is GO!

TOM BROADBENT
Job **Bizarre Picture Editor**
Favourite phrase **"Zip! Twang! Waggle-waggle doo-dah!"**



Get ready for the Greatest Show On Earth (again!) – the next London **Bizarre Ball** is on **21 May** at our new fave venue, The Scala in King's Cross.

Tickets for the show are on sale now at **Bizarremag.com**, and it's guaranteed to be an incredible party. At the last Bizarre Ball I was accosted by lovelies in latex, upstaged by another Mad Hatter, and got a furry hug from a giant blue rabbit. It was one helluva night!

And what do you think of my brilliant portrait? It's the first entry in our new competition, where we ask readers to draw the members of Team Bizarre – and if your art features on this page, you'll be rewarded with a *Bizarre* Box Of Crap. This month's artist is **Adam Lowndes**, and you can see more of his stuff at **Burgersauce.com**. If you need inspiration, see portraits of the whole team at **Tinyurl.com/bizteampics**.

TBroadbent

T Broadbent

BIZARRE READER OF THE MONTH

This month's winner of a Box Of Crap* from the *Bizarre* office is Rubberdolly, 35, from Norway, who says: **"I have a passion for Victorian gowns with small waists and high collars. High heels are mandatory."**

WANT TO WIN?
Then sign up to YourBizarre (**YourBizarre.com**). We'll choose our favourite pic to appear here each month.

* BOX OF CRAP CONTENTS MAY VARY FROM THE ONE SHOWN HERE. BUT IT WILL BE SHITE – GUARANTEED!

what the hell is... BIZARRE?

1 The planet's #1 alternative mag!

COVER: KATIE VICE

For 13 years, ***Bizarre*** has been the world's most popular alt.mag, bringing you the wildest stories, weirdest news and most amazing photos from every corner of the globe. If it's strange, challenging, fun or sexy, you'll read about it in *Bizarre* first.

2 World's biggest alt.community!

YourBizarre

YourBizarre is the beating heart of the alt.community online: a social networking site where you can show off, share your photos and chat to other freaks and geeks. And best of all, it's **100 PER CENT FREE** to join! Simply sign up at **Yourbizarre.com**!

3 The greatest parties on earth!

See *Bizarre* come to life at our amazing parties! The next London **Bizarre Ball** is on **21 May 2011**, and we're working on other parties and shows to bring the *Bizarre* experience to every corner of the UK.

LOOK! And don't forget about our **FREE** film club, **CUT!** Find out more on **p121**

TURN OVER TO SEE WHAT WEIRDNESS WE HAVE IN STORE THIS MONTH...

GEEKING OUT

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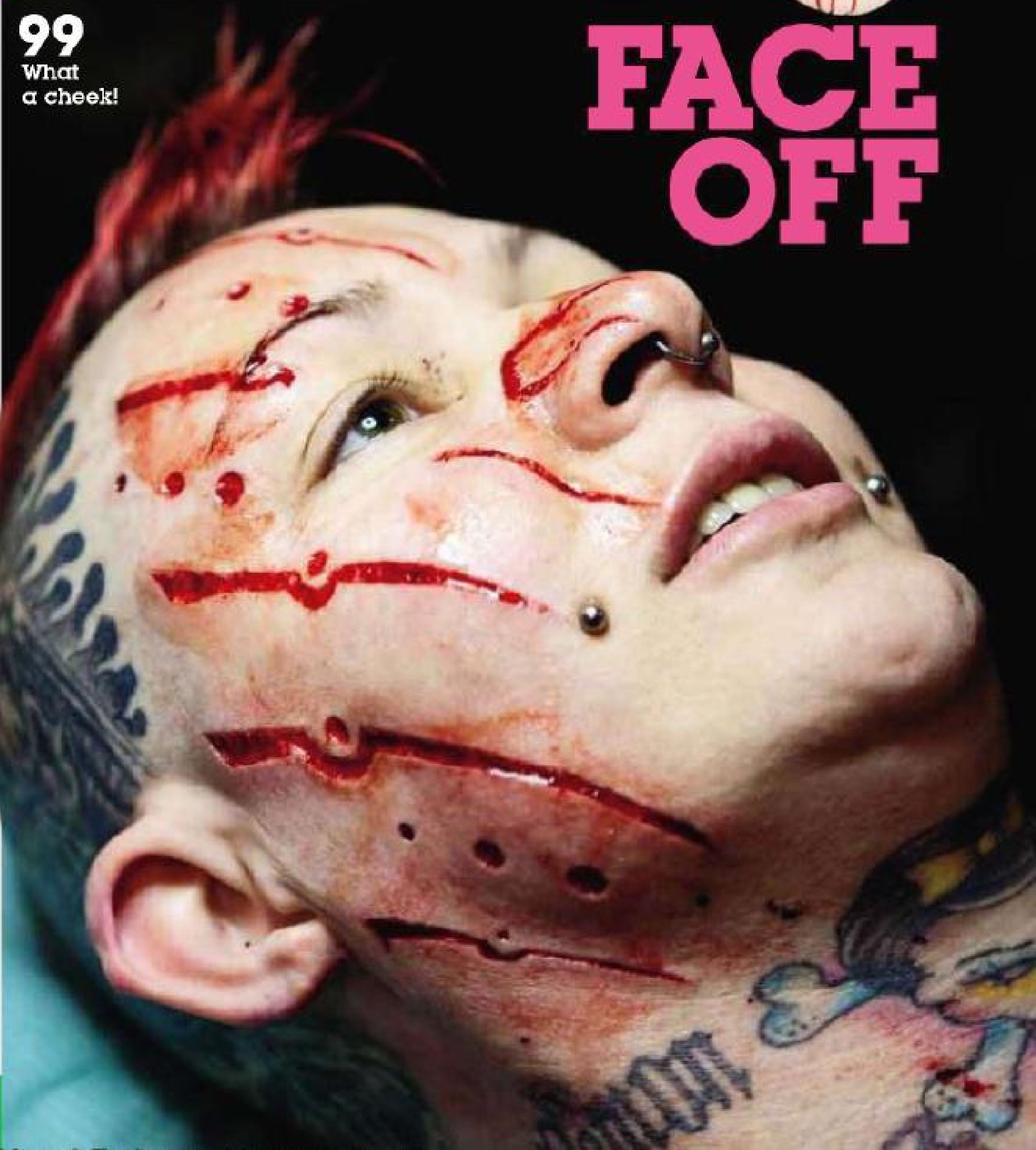

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PICTURES: NEVILLE ELDER, JOE PLUMMER, KATIE VICE, CATERS NEWS, CHRISTOPHER LANE

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SLURP
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BIZARRE RULES!

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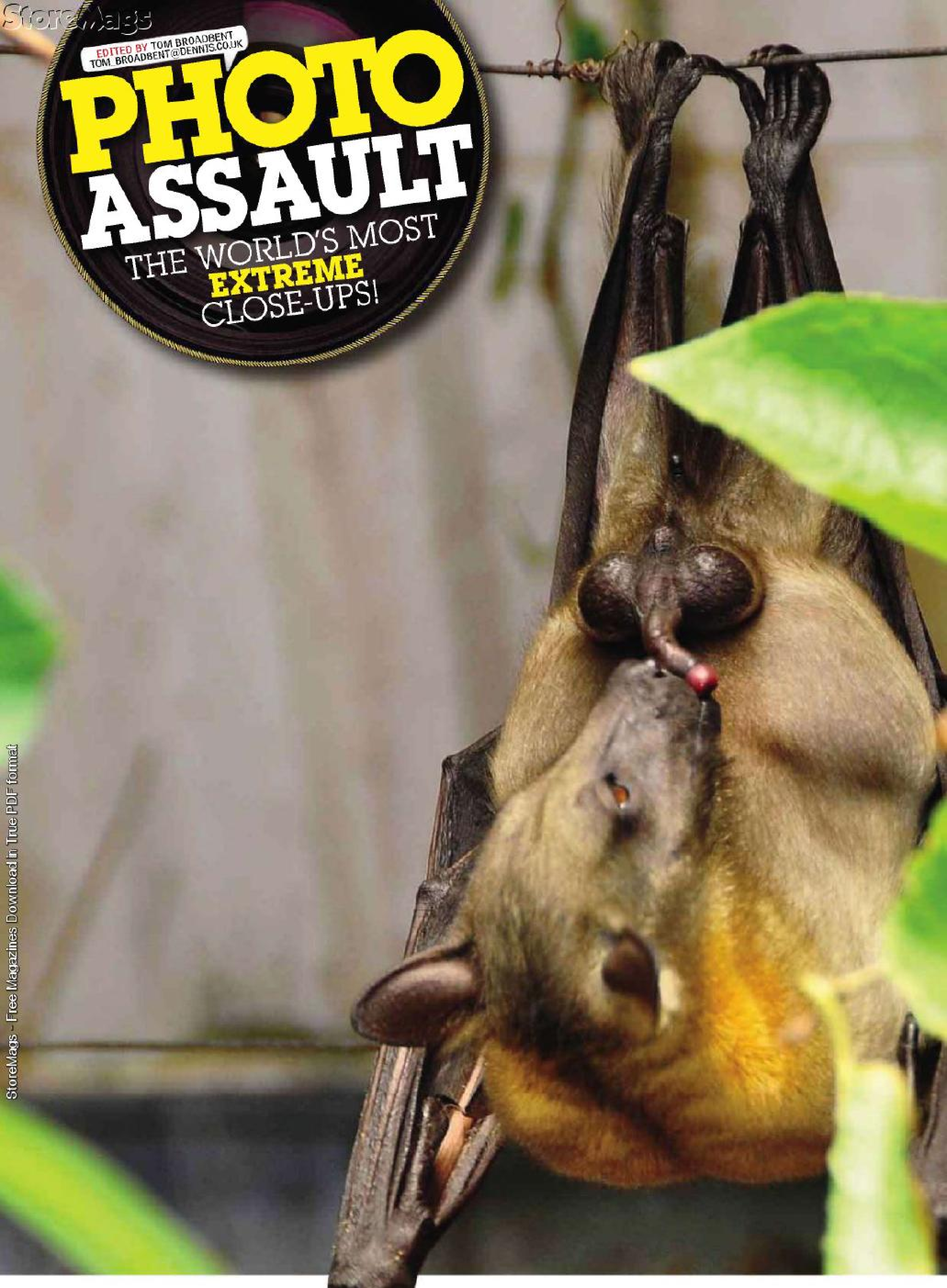
THE WORLD'S MOST **EXTREME** CLOSE-UPS!



MASTUR-BAT-ING

SOUTH AFRICA Let's face it, if you could give yourself a blowjob, you'd be doing it 24/7 – and this lucky little fruit bat is going for it. After flying around in a horny frenzy, the bat landed, bent over double and started to lick and suck its todger. Beating its wings in time, the creature worked up to the climax, threw its head back and released the money shot on its stomach. A tidy fellow, the critter gobbled up all of the cum on its fur, then chilled out, upside-down, licking its lips. We'd like to see a vampire bat try the same trick.

PICTURES: CATERS NEWS

Furry satisfying!
WHERE'S THE KLEENEX?

WANT SOMETHING A LITTLE HARDER?

Then check out *Bizarre Extreme*, a photo ezine showcasing the images too gory, sick and disturbing to feature in the magazine.

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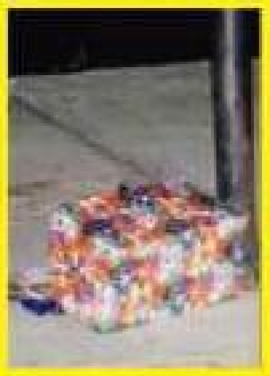
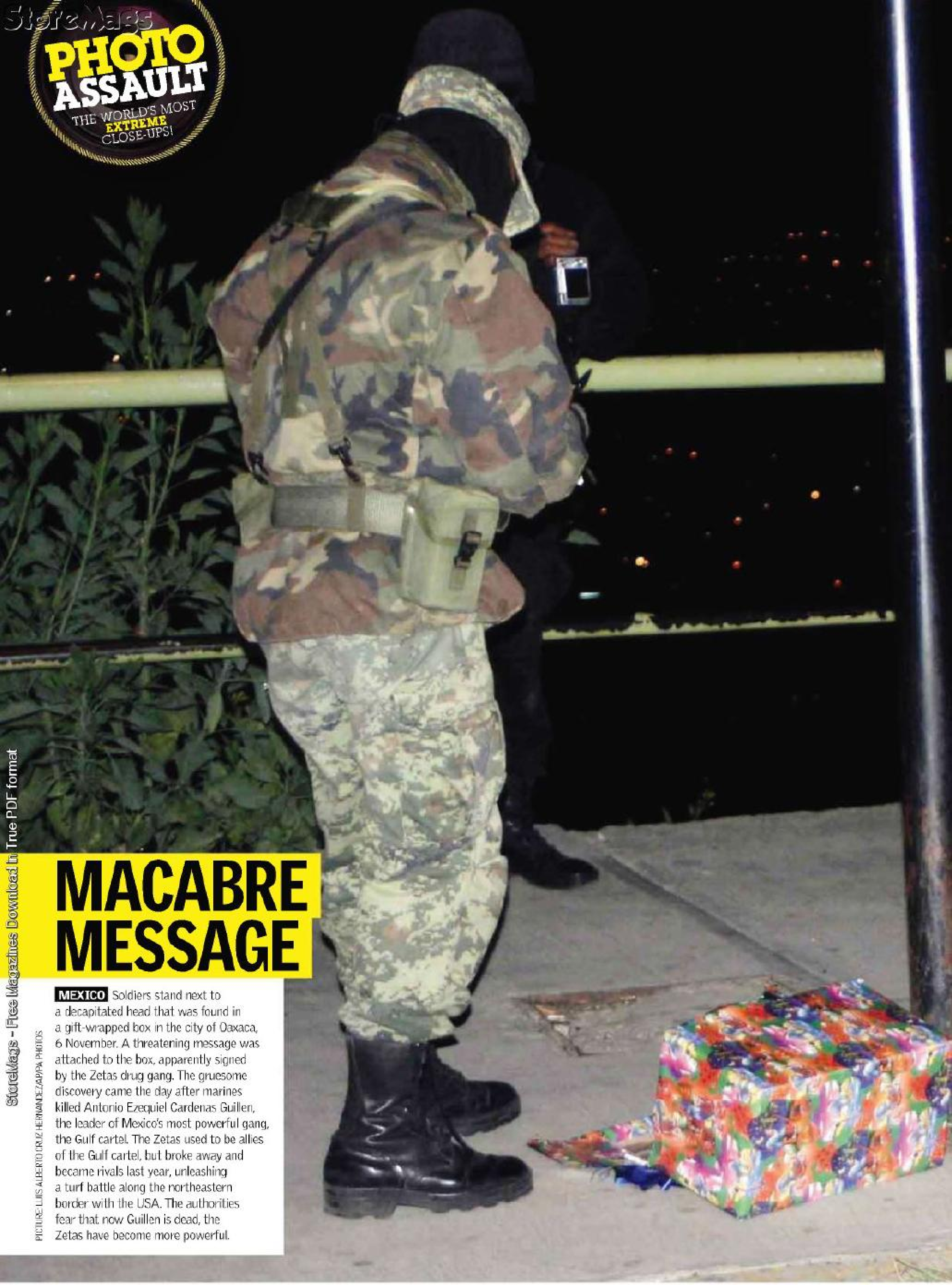
BIZARRE EXTREME VOLUME #1


WHAT'S INSIDE ?



MACABRE MESSAGE

MEXICO Soldiers stand next to a decapitated head that was found in a gift-wrapped box in the city of Oaxaca, 6 November. A threatening message was attached to the box, apparently signed by the Zetas drug gang. The gruesome discovery came the day after marines killed Antonio Ezequiel Cardenas Guillen, the leader of Mexico's most powerful gang, the Gulf cartel. The Zetas used to be allies of the Gulf cartel, but broke away and became rivals last year, unleashing a turf battle along the northeastern border with the USA. The authorities fear that now Guillen is dead, the Zetas have become more powerful.

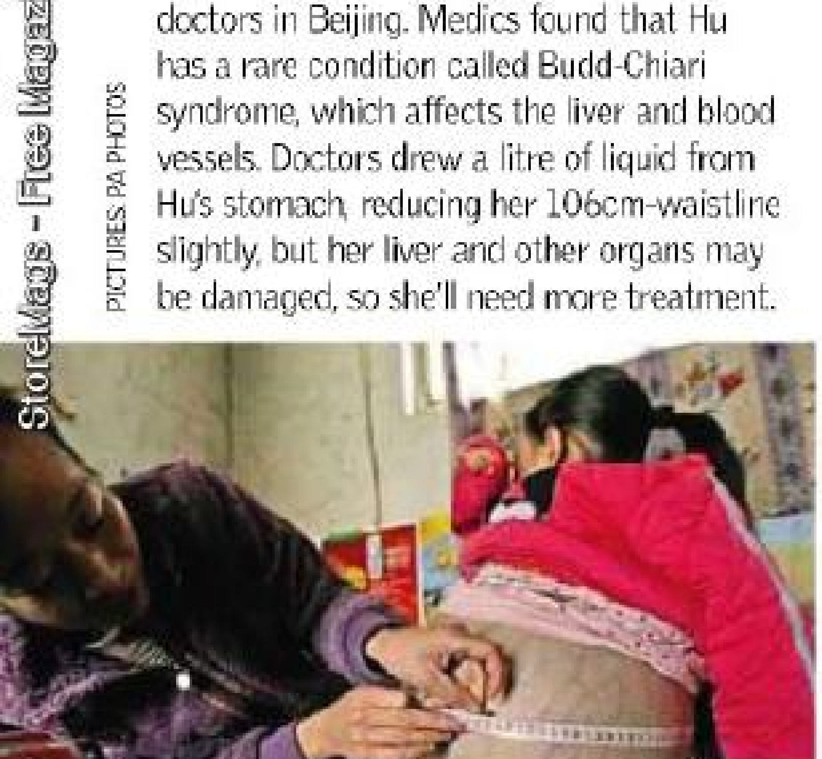
PICTURE: LUIS ALBERTO CRUZ HERNANDEZ/ZAPPA PHOTOS

WHO'S THIS WIDE?

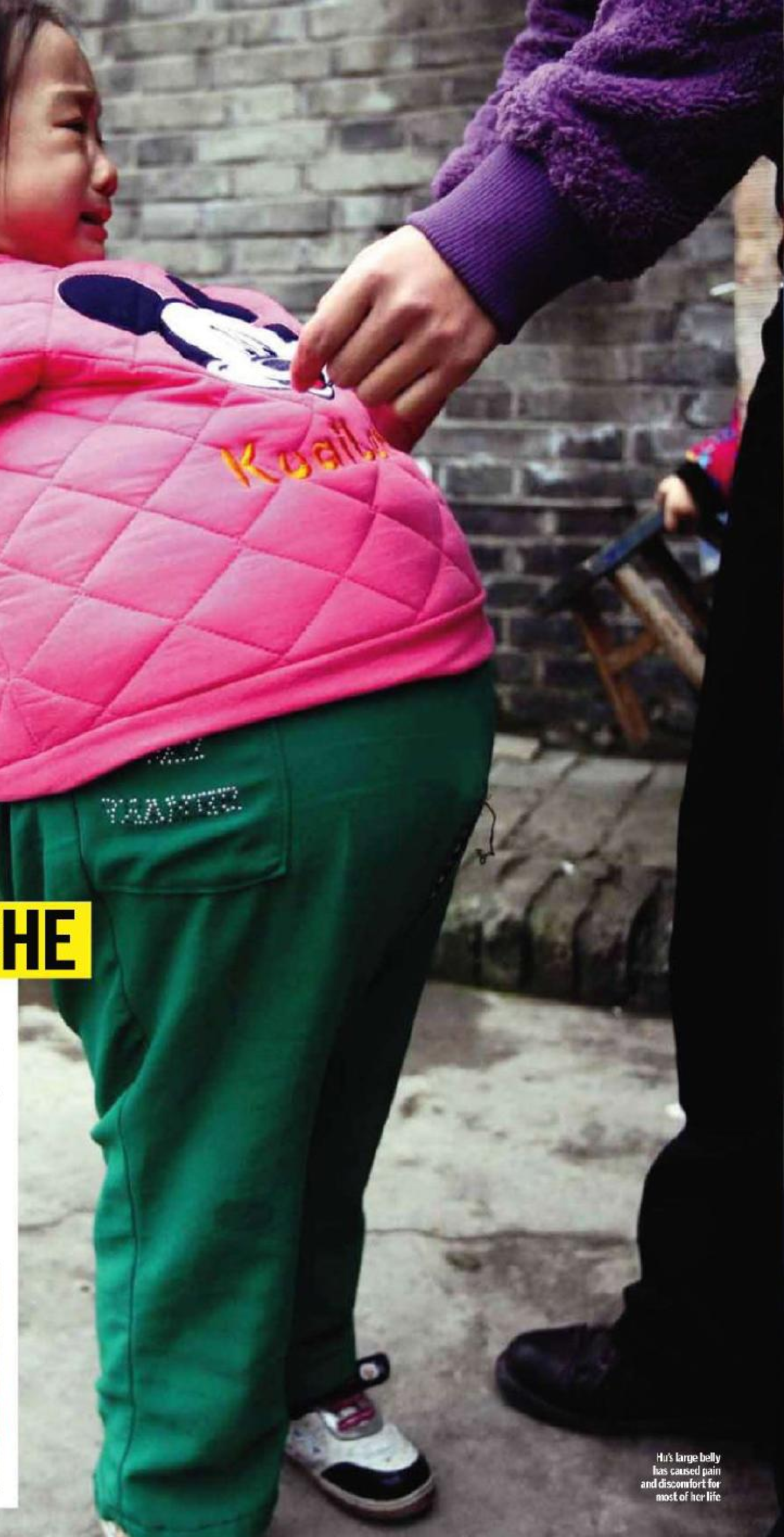
BELLY ACHE

CHINA Hu Yunxin's belly started to grow when she was eight months old, and she's now four. Hu, from Yuncheng, Shanxi province, is from a poor farming family and her parents couldn't afford to take her to a specialist. But in November a non-governmental organisation called Angel Mom arranged for her to see doctors in Beijing. Medics found that Hu has a rare condition called Budd-Chiari syndrome, which affects the liver and blood vessels. Doctors drew a litre of liquid from Hu's stomach, reducing her 106cm-waistline slightly, but her liver and other organs may be damaged, so she'll need more treatment.

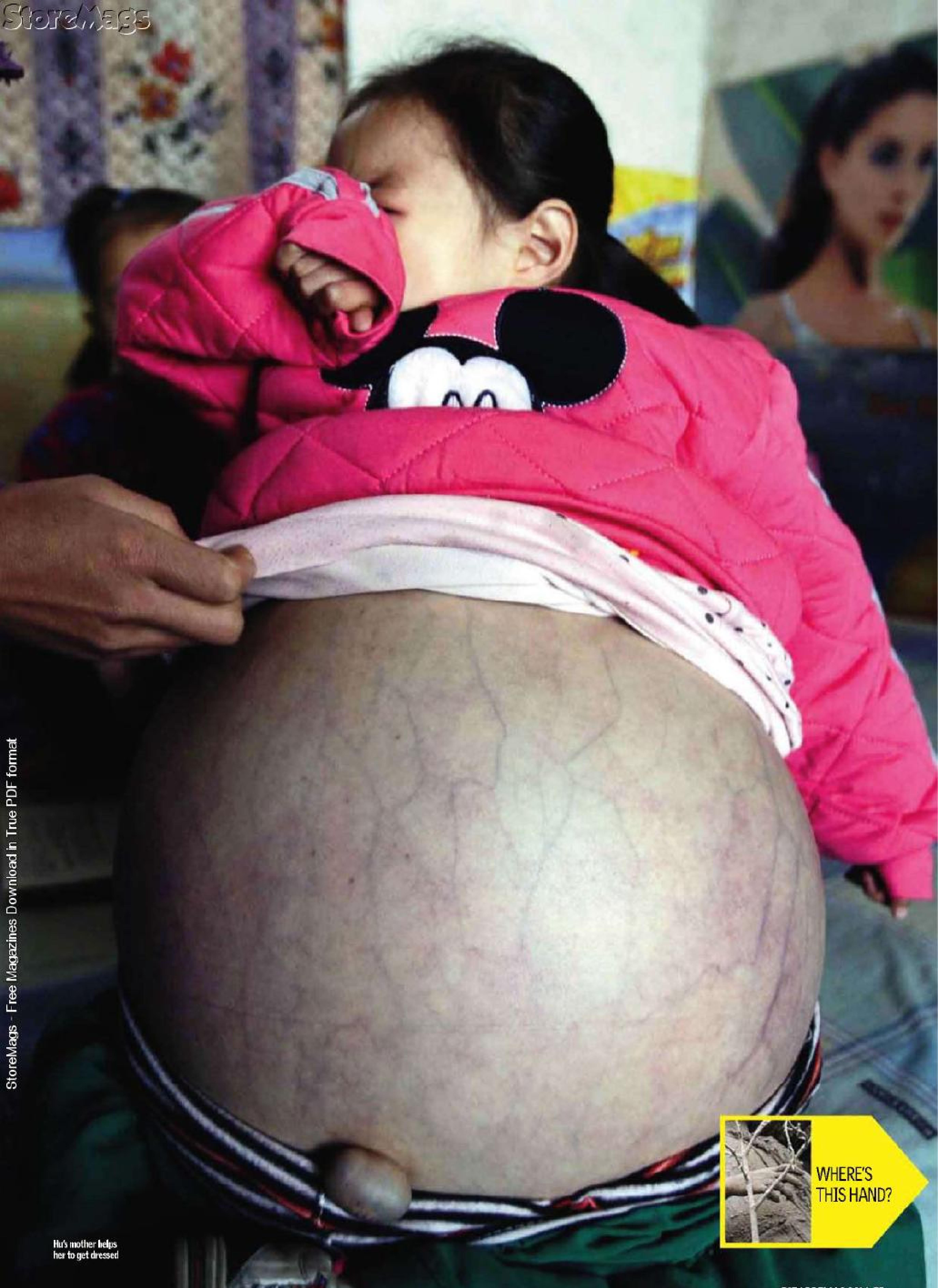
PICTURES: PA PHOTOS



Before doctors started to treat Hu, her waist measured 106cm

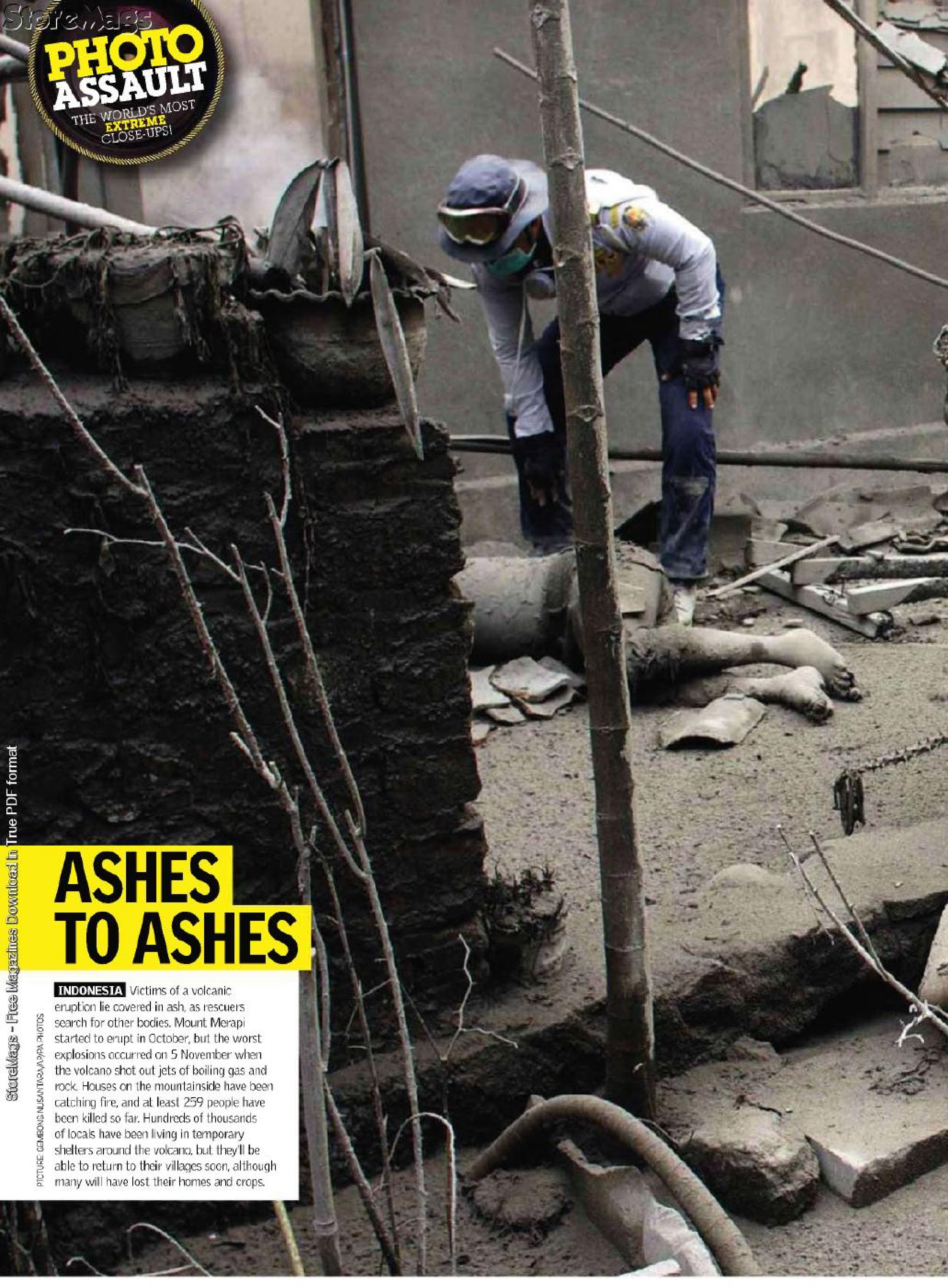


Hu's large belly has caused pain and discomfort for most of her life



Hu's mother helps her to get dressed

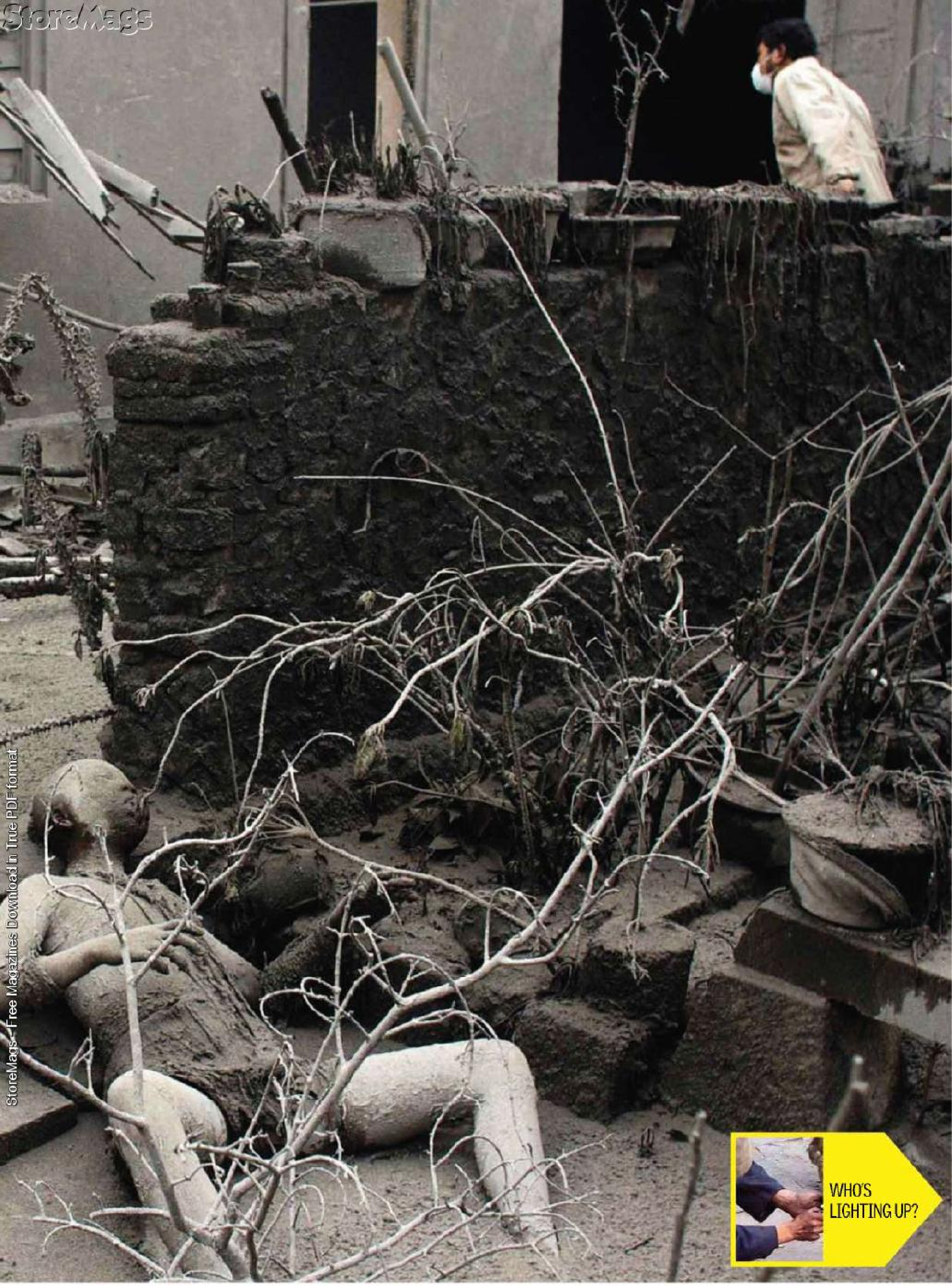
WHERE'S THIS HAND?



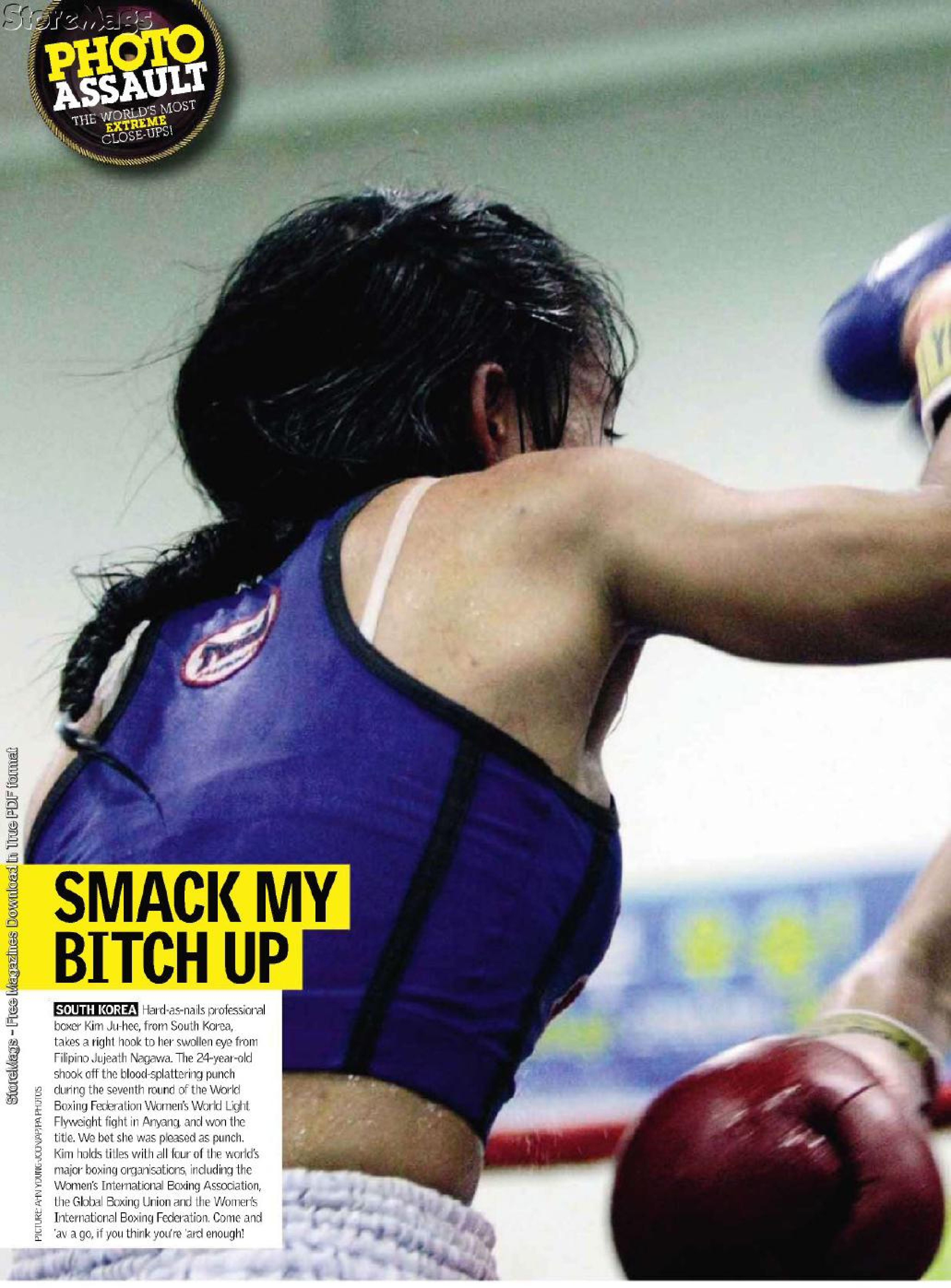
ASHES TO ASHES

INDONESIA Victims of a volcanic eruption lie covered in ash, as rescuers search for other bodies. Mount Merapi started to erupt in October, but the worst explosions occurred on 5 November when the volcano shot out jets of boiling gas and rock. Houses on the mountainside have been catching fire, and at least 259 people have been killed so far. Hundreds of thousands of locals have been living in temporary shelters around the volcano, but they'll be able to return to their villages soon, although many will have lost their homes and crops.

PICTURE: GEMBONG NUSANTARA/AFP/PA PHOTOS



WHO'S
LIGHTING UP?

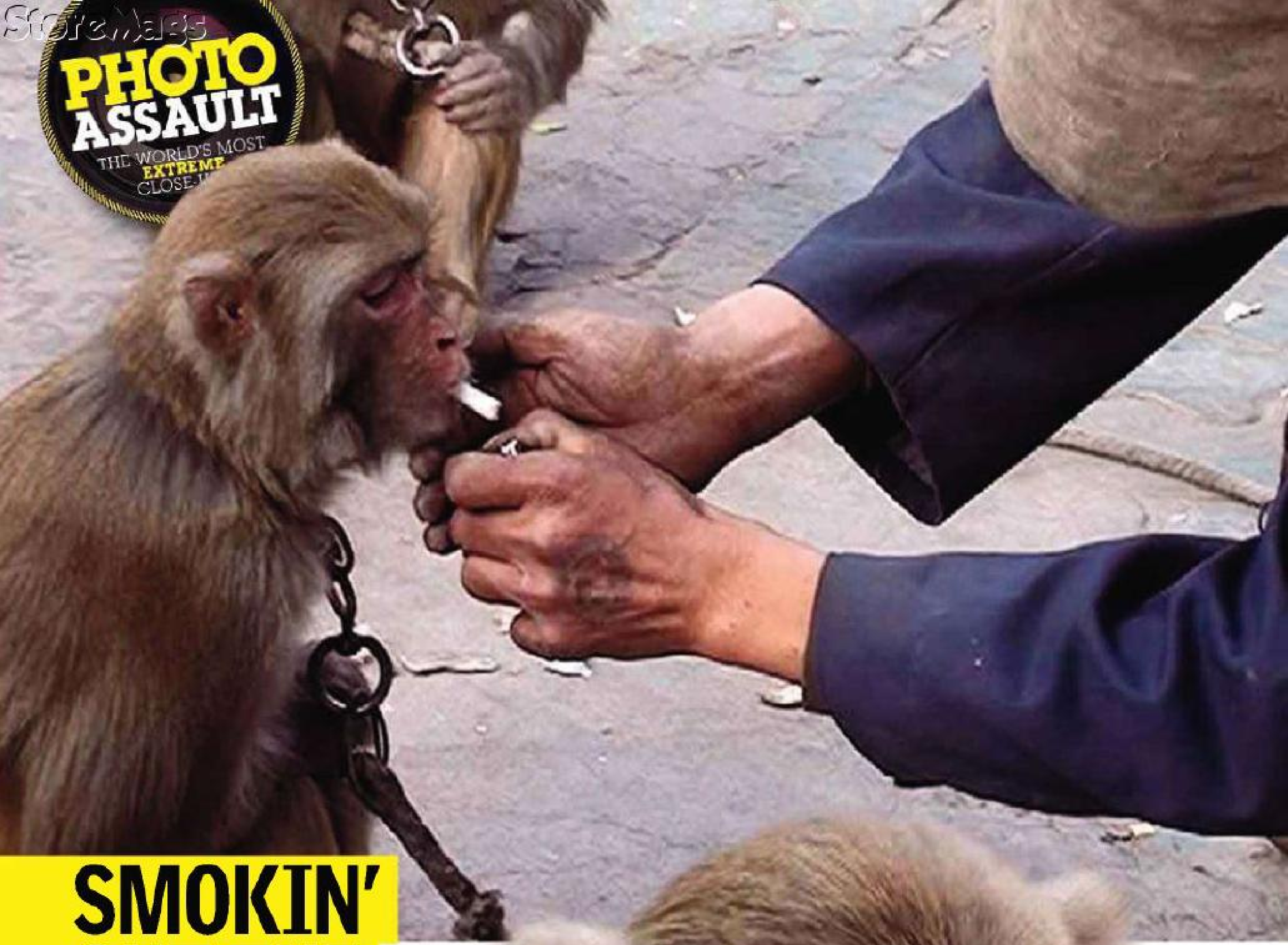


SMACK MY BITCH UP

SOUTH KOREA Hard-as-nails professional boxer Kim Ju-hee, from South Korea, takes a right hook to her swollen eye from Filipino Jujeath Nagawa. The 24-year-old shook off the blood-splattering punch during the seventh round of the World Boxing Federation Women's World Light Flyweight fight in Anyang, and won the title. We bet she was pleased as punch. Kim holds titles with all four of the world's major boxing organisations, including the Women's International Boxing Association, the Global Boxing Union and the Women's International Boxing Federation. Come and 'av a go, if you think you're 'ard enough!

PICTURE: AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP/PA PHOTOS

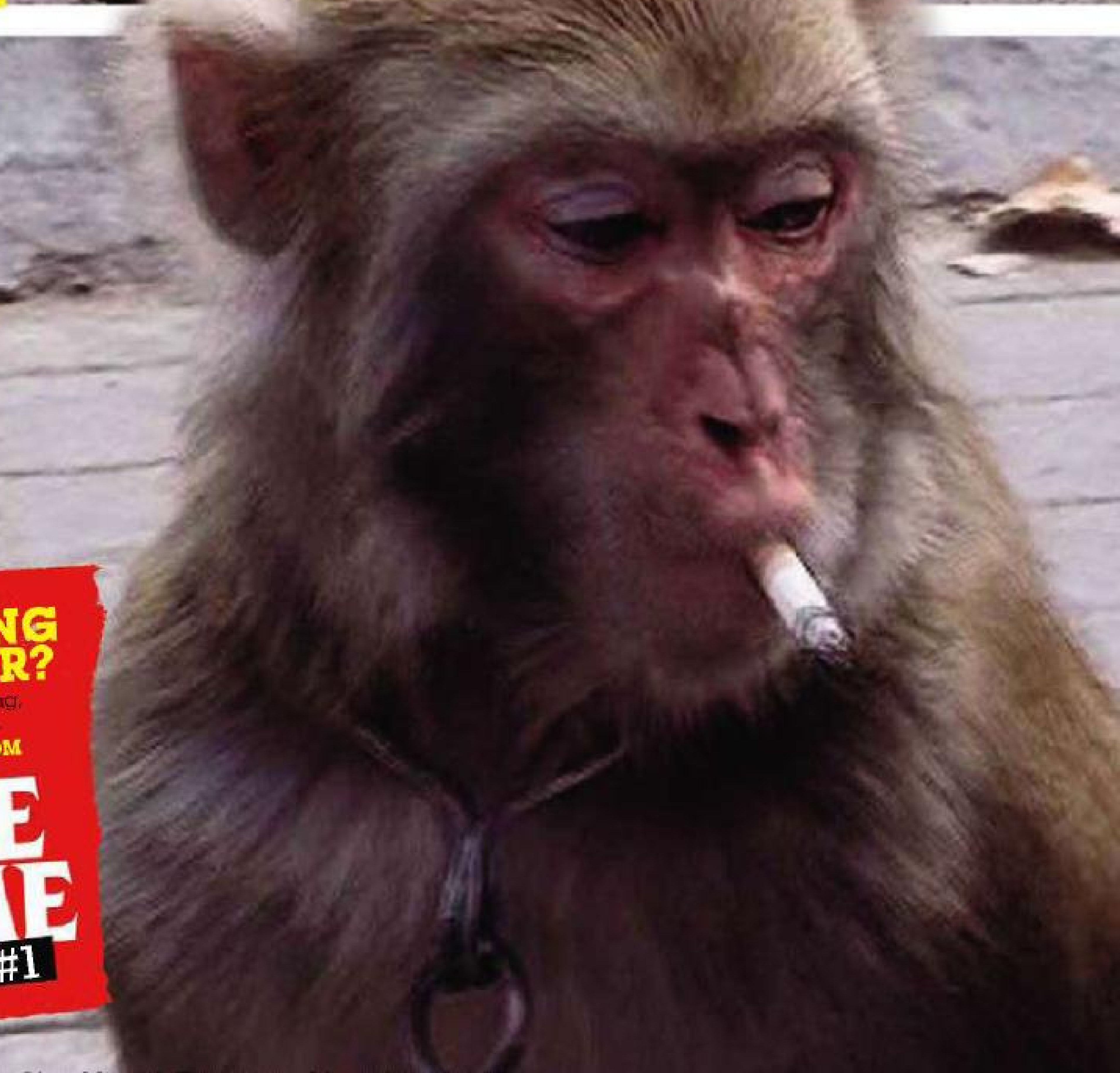
WHO'S AVIN'
A FAAAAAG?



SMOKIN' OUT THE ENEMY

CHINA These chained, smoking little monkeys in Wuhan Province make passers-by fume. The animals have been taught how to puff on ciggies as part of a street act, and while their trainer admits the creatures don't like fags, he insists it does them no harm. But many people who see the stunt aren't sucked in by it and yell at the trainer for mistreating his primates. Business can't be that smokin', then.

PICTURE: REX FEATURES



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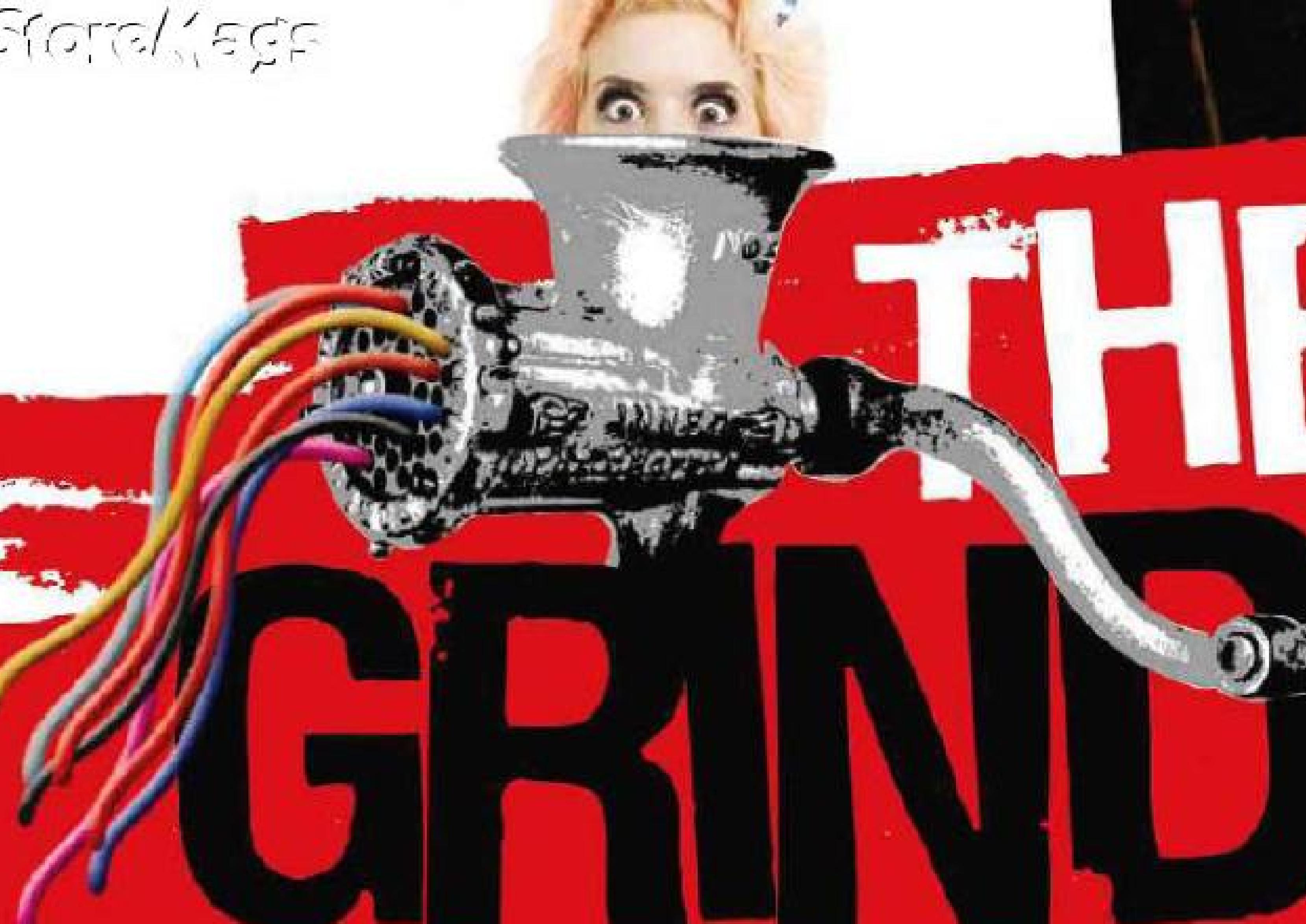


THE GRINDER

EDITED BY ALIX FOX
ALIX_FOX@DENNIS.CO.UK

Your monthly mash-up of NEWS, VIEWS, OOZE and OOHS!

2011 THE NEXT BIG TRENDS

Bizarre predicts the upcoming alternative entertainment fads you'll be going bonkers about this year…

Trend #1

FUTURISTIC SUSPENSION LIFE-DRAWING

In 2011 we'll all be hung up on sketching strung-up models!

PICTURES: DANIEL RIEDEL/DANIELRIEDELPHOTO.COM; PAIGE TURNER

FOUNDED IN A BROOKLYN DIVE BAR in 2005, by alt.cartoonist and all-round glamazonian goddess Molly Crabapple, Dr Sketchy's burlesque life-drawing classes have spread like international wildfire.

In *Bizarre 169*, we hinted that futuristic sketching was about to be big, with audiences doodling cheekily-dressed ladies on their iPads and laptops. Crabapple agrees and has tipped us off about maker Bre Petis. "He created an affordable at-home 'robot' called MakerBot, which builds 3-D models of almost anything you can imagine by building up thin layers of plastic," she reveals. "Via Twitter, he encouraged Dr Sketchy's attendees to create spontaneous mini-sculptures of hot chicks!"

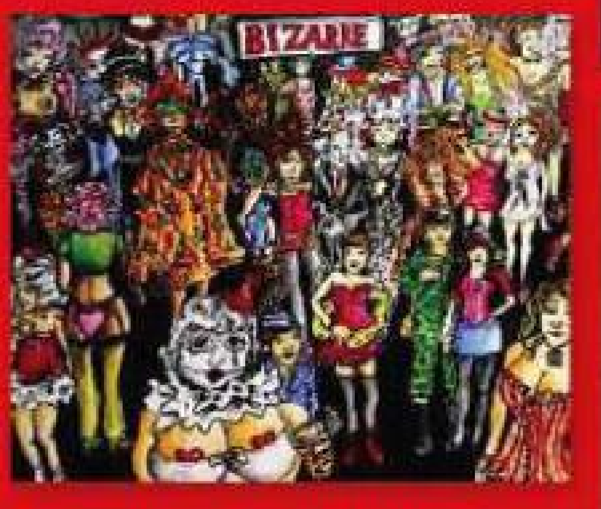
The poses that life models will be pulling in 2011 are going to step up a gear, too. This year,

you'll be drawing pictures of people suspended from hooks pierced through their flesh! James and Eden, from New Zealand-based suspension group Skindependent, recently held a throat pull (see below) for 15 minutes to give Dr Sketchy's crowds time to finish their artworks. Performance artist Samar (main pic) is also in demand for life-drawing sessions, due to the incredible length of time she can remain dangling from hooks, while still looking elegant and serene. **For more, visit Makerbot.com, Skindependent.co.nz, Ladysamar.com and Drsketchy.com**

James and Eden knew they'd pulled

THE ART TART'S SKETCHY TIPS

Rose Popay reveals the secrets of speed-drawing



- Remember, art isn't photography, so your pictures don't have to look lifelike. It's more interesting if they don't!
- Don't spunk your cash on expensive materials. Improvise by painting with chocolate sauce and lipstick.
- Drawing traditional still life arrangements is a good way to hone your skills, but add something unexpected to the composition to give it a twist, such as a dildo.
- Spying on neighbours before they catch you snooping is a great way to practice drawing faster.

Hire Rose to draw at your event by visiting Thearttart.com

ROSE DREW THE CROWD AT LAST SUMMER'S BIZARRE BALL. BUY A PRINT OF HER WORK AT TINYURL.COM/TARTBALL OR HAVE A GO AT WINNING ONE AT BIZARREMAG.COM/COMPETITIONS

Chu sees 3-D double after his seventh can of wife-beater

Trend #2

3-D GRAFFITI

Alt.exhibitions are gonna be spec-tacular!

3-D FILMS ARE ALREADY MORE FASHIONABLE than drinking Faygo at a Juggalo meet, but in October, aerosol artist Chu unveiled the world's first 3-D graffiti artwork. Covering the walls, floor and ceiling of a cube-shaped room, Chu used the basic red-and-blue technique, but it was incredibly effective... enough to make three viewers vomit on their shoes! *Bizarre* reckon you should expect more 3-D work from the lowbrow and alt.art worlds over the coming months, and look out for huge advances in 3-D porn, too. **Schudio.co.uk**

Hologlamour puss

Trend #3

HOLOGRAPHIC BURLESQUE AND GIGS

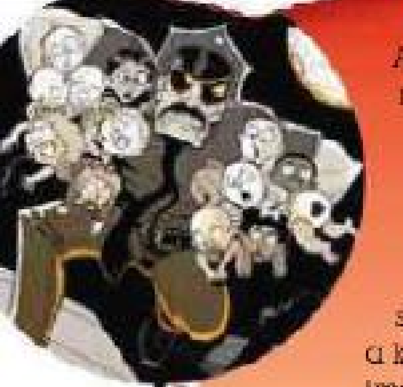
Bap to the future as striptease holograms are beamed into clubs!

MUSION EYELINER IS A HIGH-DEFINITION 3-D holographic video projection system that allows lifelike, life-sized holograms of performers to be beamed on to stages from practically anywhere in the world.

Team *Bizarre* got a sneak preview in November, and we were blown away – there's no lag between sound and movement, and the holograms are so convincing it looked like we were watching real people. So far, the technology's only been used by huge clients and for stadium gigs from the likes of Madonna and Tokio Hotel, but it's starting to be harnessed by smaller bands and used to project virtual striptease performances into burlesque venues.

In 2011, you might be able to watch a punk troupe in Los Angeles rock out in a bar in Leicester, or see a dead artist perform from beyond the grave: old videos of Sinatra have already been converted into projections. **Musion.co.uk**

"MMM" BACON



AXECOP.COM

An ongoing online graphic novel drawn by 29-year-old professional comicbook artist Ethan Nicolle, but based on stories invented by his 5-year-old brother, Malachai. It's wonderfully surreal in the way that only a kid could imagine.

YOUR FATHER!

DARTH VADER CONDOMS

Sheath your lightsaber with a Johnny that says, 'I will not be your father' on the packet.

THRILLBOARDS

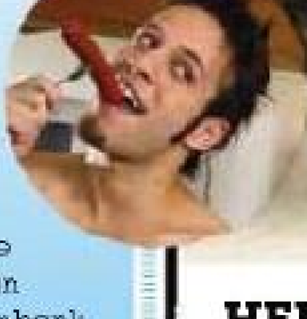
Playboy have posted ads on billboards in Germany showing huge pictures of women's T-shirt-covered hooters. When it rains, the printed T-shirts turn transparent. Badoing!

MINCE MEATER

WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S ROT THIS MONTH

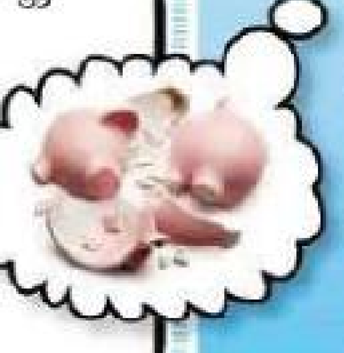
CHEESEBOARDS

Here in the UK, artist Prudence Staite has created the world's first billboard ad made from cheese. Why do we get sodding Stilton and Germany get bare boobies?



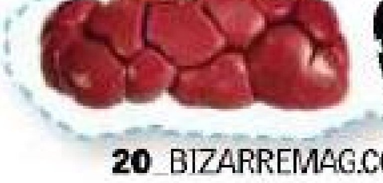
HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF

Gay-for-pay porn star Wolf Hudson (*Bizarre 170*) recently Tweeted that "You can tell a lot about person sexually just by watching them eat". However, just the day before, he'd announced he was busy guzzling cold "leftover chicken tikka massala". Is Wolf the bum-ramming equivalent of congealed curry? Follow him @WolfHudsonXXX



HSBC-YOU-NEXT-TUESDAY

It's January, and we're all more broke than Superman's back. Our bank balances are redder than a tranny's favourite lippy. Being poor sucks balls (something we're considering doing to earn extra cash).



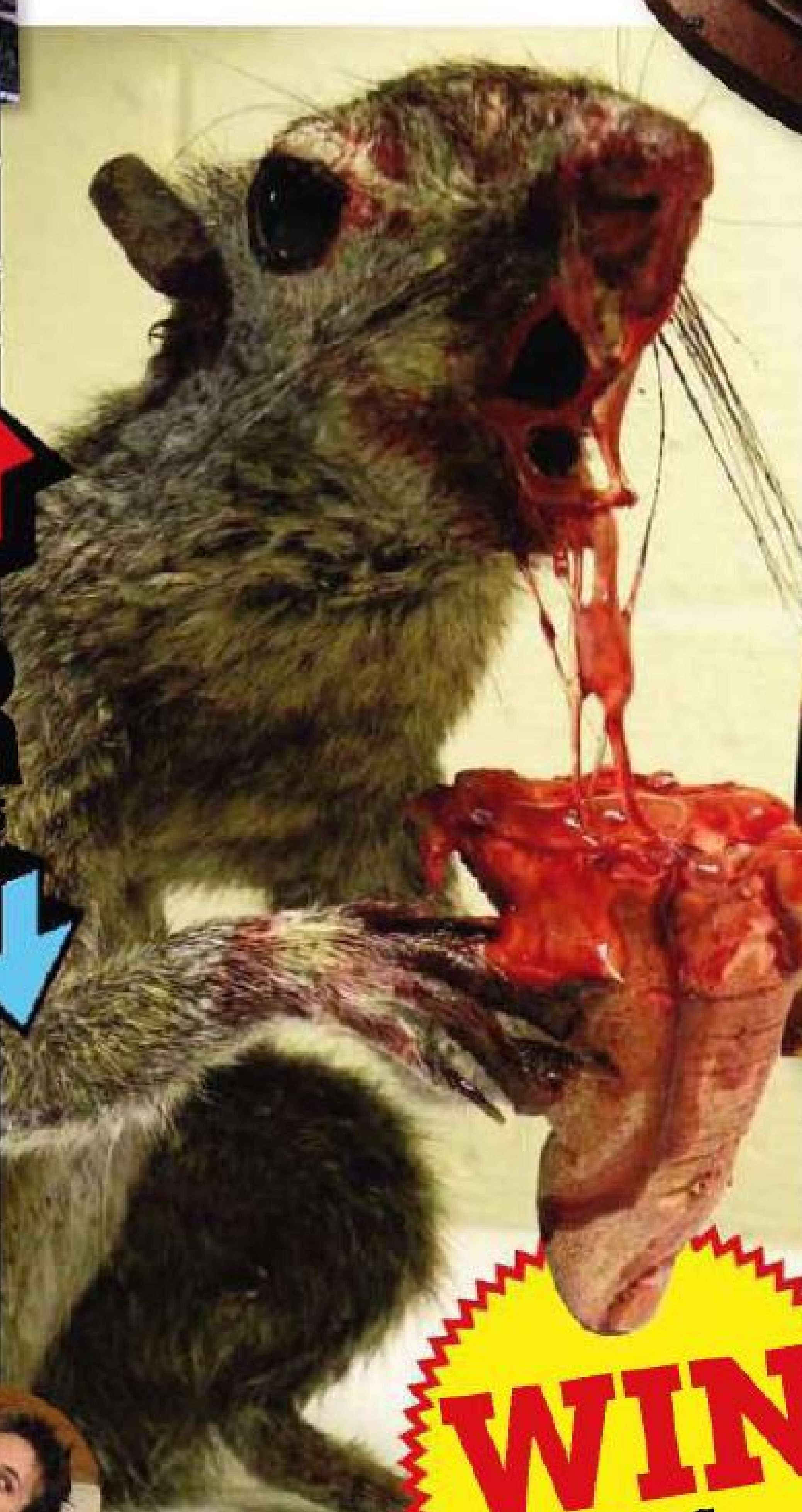
"UGH!" OFFAL!

LYMPHOMANIAC!

Help rogue taxidermist Scott beat Hodgkin's Lymphoma and win a squirrel eating a human finger!

***BIZARRE* FAVOURITE SCOTT BIBUS** creates macabre 'rogue taxidermy': preserved stuffed animals that look grossly realistic, but aren't in real-life situations (thank god). Think maggot-riddled, conjoined Siamese toads; bloated, headless, flying geese; and roadkill zombie cats that lurch along on their front two legs, squealing for brains while their entrails leak out of their severed torsos.

Sadly, Scott has been left in the lurch a bit recently – in May 2010 he was diagnosed with a form of cancer known as Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Perpetually more chipper than a French fry-making machine, Scott has remained upbeat during his illness, even publishing a tongue-in-cheek blog entitled 'Lymphomania'.



"I'll unearth my nuts 28 Days Later"

"Despite my annoying nodes of doom, I've managed to continue working on my patented brand of obscenely gory taxidermy," Scott says. "In fact, my sickness has made me even more obsessed with the veils we with the veils we draw over our eyes to stay sane in a world where everyone is aware of their own impending death. I explore that through my artwork.

The chemo hasn't caused me to lose a single hair, so my magnificent beard remains as mighty as ever, although I have become a semi-professional barfer. I can now throw up with alarming calmness, and daydream about all sorts of things while I puke. Ironically, the last thing I vomited into was an empty bag from one of my anti-nausea prescriptions."

The great news is that Scott's treatment is going well, but the bad news is that it's been hideously expensive, and the American artist needs more cash for his chemotherapy. Help him out, and be in with the chance of winning a taxidermy squirrel gnawing on a human finger, by entering his competition (see left). Scott, *Bizarre* salutes you and wishes you all the best.

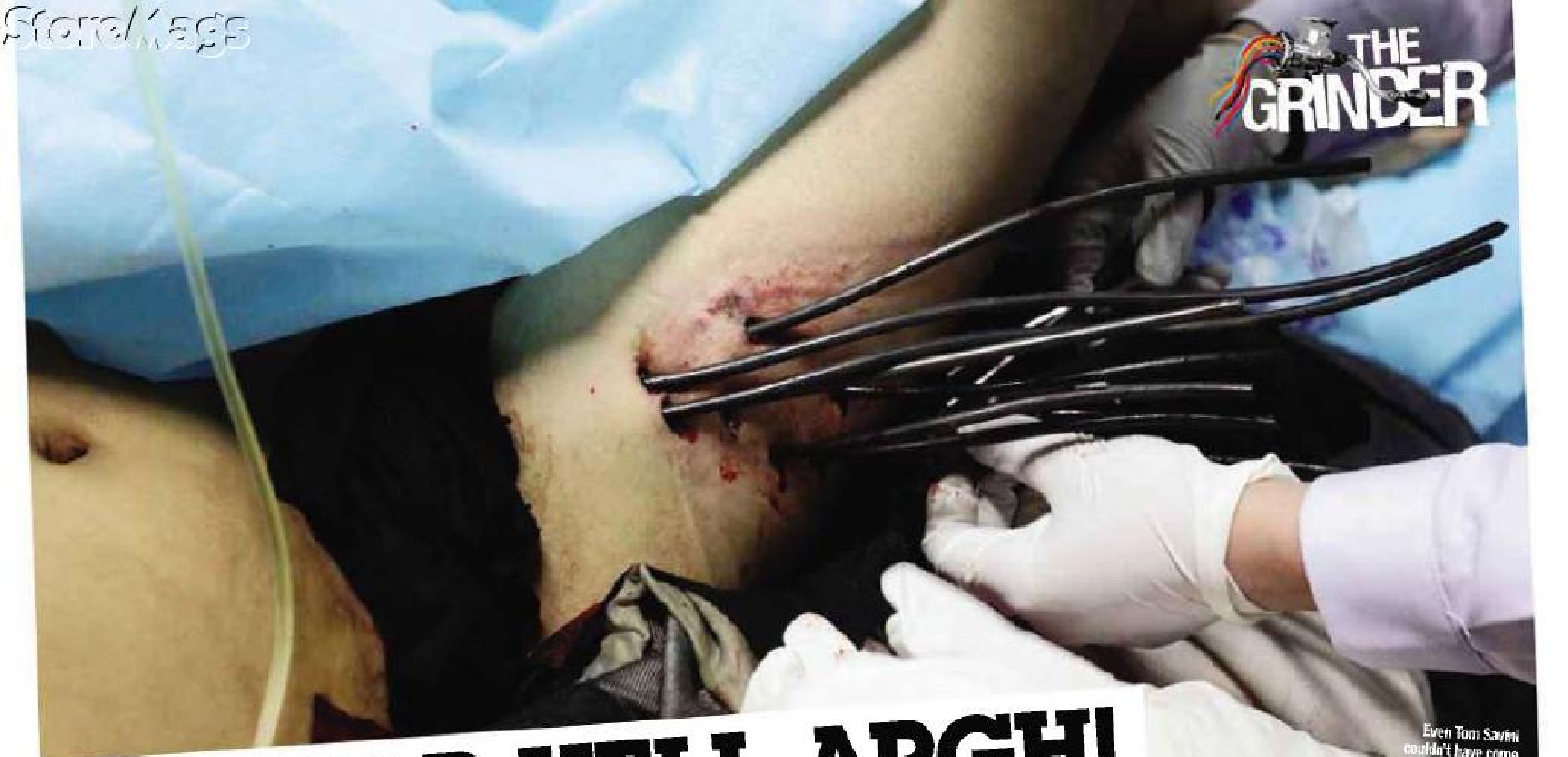
Check out Scott's creations at Deadanimalart.com
Read his blog at Lymphomania.livejournal.com

WIN THIS SQUIRREL!

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

1 Go to Tinyurl.com/ScottyBotty before 15 March
2 Donate at least $20 (£12.60) to Scott's fund
3 Write the word BIZARRE in the message box accompanying your donation
4 Spread the word!
5 After 15 March, Scott will randomly select the name of one donor to win the squirrel!

COMPETITION CLOSES 15 MARCH 2011. WINNER WILL BE CHOSEN AT RANDOM FROM ALL ENTRANTS WHO HAVE DONATED A MINIMUM OF $20 (£12.60) TO SCOTT'S FUND. ENTRANTS MUST BE OVER 18 YEARS OLD. FOR STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS VISIT DENNIS.CO.UK/COMP/TERMS

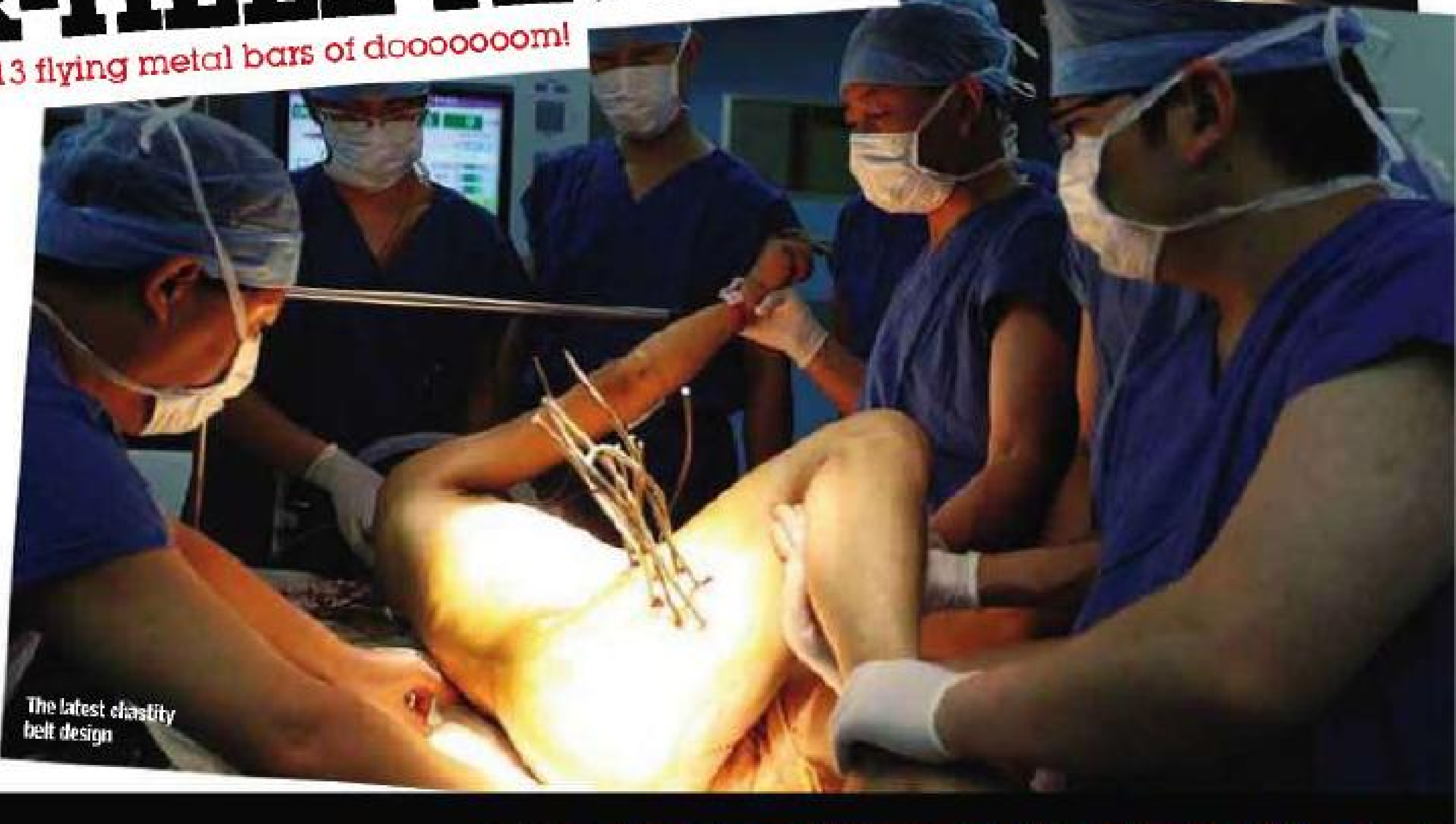


Even Tom Savini couldn't have come up with this one

BAR-BAR-HELL-ARGH!

Chinese chap gets skewered by 13 flying metal bars of dooooooom!

HERE AT *BIZARRE*, WE UNDERSTAND the association between '13 bars' and 'extreme pain' quite clearly. For example, if you drink a jug of curdled Baileys mixed with port in 13 bars in a row, the next day your brains will feel like the little cartoon shoe that gets dipped in a vat of acid in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Likewise, listening to more than 13 bars of any song by Nickelback will make your ears bleed. But factory worker Xiao Wang found a new way to hurt himself with 13 bars when over a dozen thick, metal rods fired into his body during an industrial accident: seven bars shot right through his pelvis, slicing up his intestines and bladder; four pierced his thighs together; and two were embedded in his abdomen.



The latest chastity belt design

LOVE AT FIRST SITE

We've given Savage Hearts an alt.jolt – now *Bizarre*'s online dating service is a zillion times better!

VALENTINE'S DAY IS COMING UP, but if you're finding that Cupid's aiming his arrows with about as much accuracy as a guy with a DIY Prince Albert trying to piss in a thimble, why not try *Bizarre*'s online dating network, Savage Hearts?

After listening to your feedback, we radically redesigned the site at the end of last year, so it's shed-loads better. For a start, Savage Hearts is now 100 per cent dedicated to being a totally alternative network, packed with tons of hot gals and guys who are likely to share your tastes. You won't have to sift through the profiles of tons of straight-laced squares in order to find the type of like-minded friendly freaks you want to connect with.

We've also extended the preferences and search options, so it's much easier and quicker to search through the hundreds of members in your area who fit your specific criteria. Plus, you can post status updates, upload videos, receive SMS updates, upload photos straight from your mobile and send cool virtual gifts to any hot pieces who catch your eye!

Registration is free, and if you enter the code BIZARRE1, you'll get full membership until midnight on Feb 18 for just one chunky English pound!* Head to Savagehearts.com now!

BIZARRE
SAVAGE
HEARTS

*PROMOTIONAL CODE BIZARRE1 ALLOWS READERS TO GET FULL MEMBERSHIP TO SAVAGE HEARTS UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON 18 FEB 2010, AFTER WHICH THEY WILL BE BILLED £1495 EVERY MONTH UNLESS THEY CANCEL THEIR SUBSCRIPTION.

SPUNK & DISORDERLY

Sexy stuff reviews & erotic guff news

NEW CLASSIC PORN NIGHTS WITH ARTWANK!

ArtWank is a new retro, filth-themed, tongue-in-(bum)cheek event presenting pornographic movies and slides from the 1880s-1960s, together with fascinating lectures by guest speakers from the sex industry, debates, and live cabaret shows.

Hosted by potty-mouthed pin-up Ophelia Bitz, it currently takes place once a month in Brighton, but there are plans to expand to Bristol, Manchester, Edinburgh and London this year. *Bizarre* reckons it's gonna take off in a big, turgid, swollen, purple-veined way.

Bitz tells us that so far, ArtWank has hosted talks by saucy writer Emily Dubberly, who founded women's erotic mag *Scarlet*, and Bill Shipton, the 'Godfather of Sploshing' who edits wet'n'messy custard-drenched kink rag, *Splosh*!

"The ancient smutty photos and films we show are often hilarious, but they can also be thought-provoking," says Bitz. "Did you know it's thought that a large proportion of performers in pre-1960s porn were patients from mental institutions? Or that the earliest known surviving porn flick was shot around 1907? It's called *El Sartorio*, and shows three maidens bathing in a river, who start touching each other. A man in a devil mask then leaps out of foliage and captures one of the women, before persuading her to give him a blow job, do a 69, and get knobbed by Satan." Somebody call an XXXorcist! For details of future nights, keep checking Artwank.co.uk

We always knew great-granny was strict

"Ohhh, I feel like death, me..."

Dead clever Taiwanese medical students act out their own demise in lessons

PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING GETS made in Taiwan, but things and people die there too, so medical students are being taught about the science and rituals of snuffing it in special 'death-feeling classes'.

Inside the dimly-lit rooms at Jen-Teh Junior College Of Medicine, Nursing And Management, tutors instruct the pupils to write their own wills and eulogies, before acting out their own wakes and funerals. Each student takes their turn to climb inside a casket which is then closed and covered with a cloth, while their classmates conduct a mock service for their 'dead' friend, with speeches, weeping and wailing. Once the class have acted out 'burying' the coffin, their very-much-alive pal is freed from their tomb.

The intention is to give would-be doctors and nurses an understanding of what it's like to be a terminally ill patient who knows they're about to pass away, or how it feels to be someone who's recently lost a loved one. 'Death-feeling' lessons are said to be an effective way of ensuring students don't forget to show empathy and respect in such situations.

Having a wail of a time

THE FOX HOLE

A VON LADY

Do your stinky tootsies need some nice new whiff-free sneakers to live in? Online shoe shop Rubbersole.co.uk are gonna give one lucky reader a free pair of Converse, like the ones va-va-voom-infused alt.cutie Von wears in our cover shoot! Head to Bizarremag.com/competitions to enter. Not even remotely flippin' bothered about ruddy trainers? Then enjoy this snap of bouncy funball Von-Von fondling my bon-bons, instead (right). My hypnotic nipples have given her a lazy eye, poor duckie. Or that might just be her 'specialness' leaking through.

Von licks my Mini Milks...

...Victoria's just greedy

"YOU'RE SO VEIN...

you probably think we wrote wrongs about you." Er, well, we sorta did! In *Bizarre 168*, we forgot to credit Harmony Nicholas, the photographer who took the delicious pictures of Aussie alt.model Victoria Veins. Oopth! Sorry! We were distracted by thinking about what we'd get up to if only we could somehow get the delectable Victoria in a padded room with an overripe courgette, a birthing stool, a scold's bridle and some Vegemite. Victoria will be making trips to Los Angeles and New York to shoot this year, so expect to see more of her divine form soon. Need her hotness *now*? Take a peek at Victoriaveins.com

WHO THE FUCK IS?

Kitten DeVille

She's the queen of the tassel *and* the dirty rascal

LET'S FACE IT – BURLESQUE IS STILL more popular than the only goat in a remote mountain village populated solely by male virgins and, some would argue, more over-exposed than a butt-naked Jackie Stallone in a see-through rain mac.

But while some folk are sick to the back teeth of the boobs'n'boas scene, others remain deeply enamoured, and there are still plenty of pasty princesses worth championing – not least the foxy, feline delights of Kitten DeVille. Her beauty is unquestionable – Kitten modelled for Jean Paul Gaultier in 1992 – and her burlesque pedigree is just as impressive: she was crowned Miss Exotic World and Queen Of The Quake (a tits'n'tush shake) in 2002.

Kitten kick-started her high-kicking career in Los Angeles in 1995, back when – gasp! – there was no burly scene at all. "I had nothing to reference except some 1950s magazines," says the Californian, "but me and some of my colleagues at Club Fuck – a gay nightspot where I worked as a go-go dancer – were inspired enough to launch the now legendary Velvet Hammer neo-burlesque troupe." They soon became one of the premier names on the West Coast, and a buzzword among the Hollywood glitterati.

Since then, Kitten's gotten her claws into some of the coolest kids in show business, appearing in music videos for Rob Zombie and opening a gig for psychobilly punk icons The Cramps. Like the blurb on the book that Velvet Hammer released a few years ago says, Kitten and co are fuelled by booze, smokes, post-feminist punk attitudes and a desire to walk on the wild side. Me-ow! "Lux Interior and Poison Ivy left me tongue-tied with awe," she recalls. "I was so nervous about meeting them, and the audience weren't into me initially, as they were too eager to see the band. But Lux strutted on to the stage after my act and said 'Woah, how do we follow that?' It was a huge thing to hear that. I guess working with The Cramps made sense because my brand of neo-burlesque had a lot in common with their breed of rock'n'roll."

One of Kitten's other career highlights was being photographed in her birthday suit by famed snapper and Bettie Page collaborator, Bunny Yeager. "She kept dropping hints that the shots would look better if I dropped my clothes!" Kitten laughs. "I finally agreed... how could I say no to the icon that is Bunny? She doesn't take a bad picture and her nude photos are beautiful; it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up."

Kittens currently working on a new revue with octogenarian shimmying legend Tempest Storm, in an attempt to take fan dances back to the huge theatre venues that burlesque graced in its golden age. We'd tell her to break a leg – but she's already done it! "I trained with real Mexican luchadors for a show named *Lucha Va Voom*," she explains. "It began with girls wrestling each other while stripping down to their G-strings, then progressed to lasses grappling 20st men! We'd all pull crazy moves and it was great fun, but I ended up breaking a limb when one of the guys slipped off the top rope and landed square on my leg." It's a good job kittens have nine lives, eh? **Ciaran McCauley**

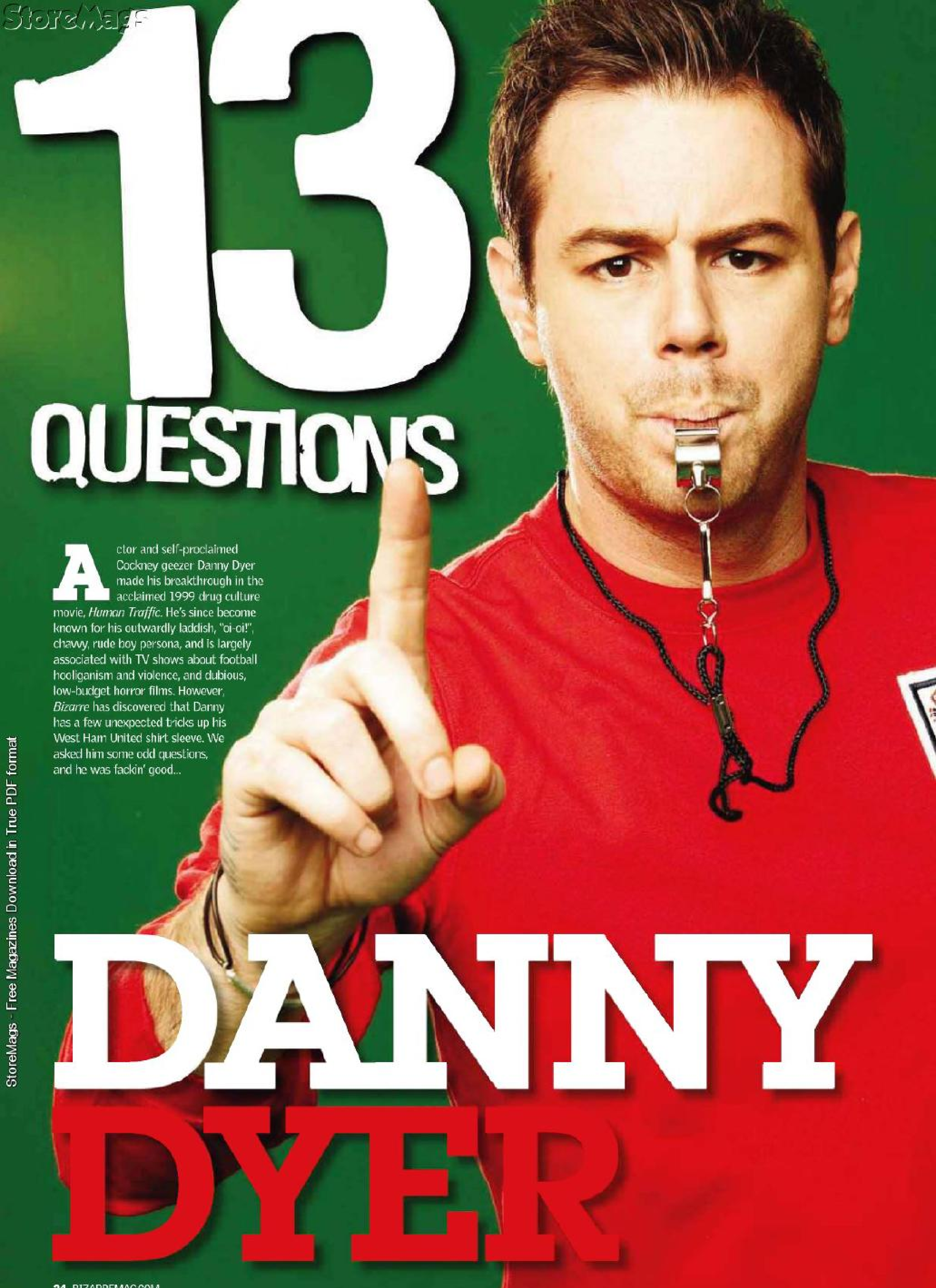
Kittendeville.net

WIN!

AN EXCLUSIVE ONE-ON-ONE BURLESQUE LESSON!

Kitten DeVille was recently asked to perform in London by Sharon Kay, AKA Indiana Belle, founder of Burlesquebaby.com burlesque school, and Retrotease.net online forum. Now, you can win a one-on-one intensive burlesque lesson with Sharon! **Head to Bizaremag.com/competitions to enter**

PICTURES: FALCON FOTOS; PA PHOTOS



13 QUESTIONS

Actor and self-proclaimed Cockney geezer Danny Dyer made his breakthrough in the acclaimed 1999 drug culture movie, *Human Traffic*. He's since become known for his outwardly laddish, "oi-oi!", chavvy, rude boy persona, and is largely associated with TV shows about football hooliganism and violence, and dubious, low-budget horror films. However, *Bizarre* has discovered that Danny has a few unexpected tricks up his West Ham United shirt sleeve. We asked him some odd questions, and he was fackin' good...

DANNY DYER

1 What's the weirdest thing you've ever had in your mouth?

I ate frogs' legs recently, on a sophisticated night out in France. They came deep-fried in batter, and tasted like greasy, slimy, muddy bits of chicken gristle... faaaaackin' 'ell Grim. I won't be ordering Kermit again. I was trying to get into the Gallic spirit. You know, "When in Rome..." or Paris, as the case may be. Although I've been to Rome as well, and the cooking's fuckloads better! Being an east London lad, I've eaten plenty of jellied eels, too. I like 'em, but the wobbliness and the fact that you have to chew around a big hunk of spinal cord that runs down the centre of 'em turns most people's stomachs.

2 What's the weirdest experience you've ever had with a fan?

I get a lot of MILFs. When I published my autobiography in October, I did a tour of stores to promote it. There were so many horny mums queuing up to lean over the signing table in their low-cut fuzzy jumpers. They passed me notes inviting me to come and shag them on their sofas, and bend them over their fackin' Formica kitchen counters. The oddest piece of fanmail I've ever received was from a gay tranny, who wanted me to trace around my feet and hands on pieces of paper, then send him the outlines.

Danny Dyer's Funniest Football Foul-Ups DVD, and his autobiography *Straight Up*, are out now.
Dannydyer.com

3 We take it you didn't do it?

Actually, I did! It's pretty fackin' weird, don't get me wrong, but at the same time it's not going to hurt anyone if he wanks off over a drawing of my plates of meat, is it? I probably made that tranny's day.

4 Would you ever play a transvestite?

Yes, I would. Most people associate me with hard man, wide boy-type roles, but I'm anxious to expand my repertoire and I've already played many diverse characters that the general public aren't aware of. For example, I had a major role as a gay lad in a film called *Borstal Boy* in 2000. You might think, "Oh yeah, Borstal. Prison. That'll be yet another Danny Dyer flick about fighting and fisticuffs in the clink, then." But it's a heartbreaking story, with plenty of kissing scenes between me and Shawn Hatosy (who's since been in *CSI*, *Law & Order*, *Six Feet Under*, and *Dexter*).

5 In 1994, you played a peasant boy named Bran who hung out with lepers in *Cadfael* – a TV series set in the Middle Ages, about a monk who solves crimes. Are you religious or spiritual?

I'm not religious, but I saw a monk's ghost, once. When I was a teenager I used to do graffiti. I was in an illegal crew called TPK – 'The Perfect Krime' – and my tag was a little picture of a clown that I'd spray on walls and train carriages around town. One night, at about 3am, a mate and I had just jumped over a wall into an alleyway and were getting our cans out ready to paint, when we saw a hooded figure coming towards us. Thinking we were about to get nicked, we tried to look innocent, but as the figure got closer I realised it was a bloke in monks' robes, and he was sort of drifting along. It was so fackin' spooky. I'm in no doubt it was a spectre, especially as I later found out that there used to be a monastery in the area. I wish I'd looked harder, but I was too busy shitting myself.

6 Speaking of monks, you were in a telly series about Ibiza holiday reps called *Is Harry On The Boat?* 'Harry' or 'Harry Monk' is Cockney rhyming slang for 'spunk', while 'Race' or 'Boat race' means 'face'. What's your favourite slang?

I heard some young lads ask for "A pint of Janet Street-Porter" in the pub the other day, meaning 'water'. That phrase used to mean 'quarter' – a measure of drugs – so maybe the youth of today are cleaning up their act!

7 You did a fair few illegal substances while playing drug dealer Moff in *Human Traffic*...

Fack yeah, I was higher than Mary Poppins' kite when that was being shot. Pretty much everything you see in that film is real, hence why it's so convincing! I'd never put that many chemicals in my system now – I went overboard. I talk honestly about it in my book. I'm not going to pretend drugs are harmless, but I'm not going to pretend they're not a reality either; tons of people from all kinds of walks of life do a few lines or drop a pill at the weekend. Alcohol does a lot more damage.

8 We heard that you're about to take on the lead role in an upcoming remake of 1972 horror flick *The Asphyx* (Ed's note: *The Ass Fix*?), which tells the tale of an English country squire who believes he can achieve immortality by capturing the spirit of death in a bottle. Can you tell us more?

Don't believe all you hear! I can't tell you about *The Asphyx*, but I can reveal that I'm about to play a serial killer in a film called *Captured*.

9 Oh yeah?

My character likes to kidnap and torture women, and tries to rape them, too. But he can't get it up, and the frustration of being impotent drives him to murder his victims in a variety of grisly ways. He's a properly fucked-up psycho, but creepily childlike in many ways. Most of the movie is set in my character's car, while he's driving his latest victim back to his house, ready to assault her. But he doesn't realise that she's a highly-skilled psychologist, who tries to get inside his head and figure him out, so that she can use her knowledge to escape.

10 Are you worried the tabloids will pick on you for playing a character with a floppy cock?

I've got two kids, so there's living proof that I have no problems getting a hard-on! It's the second time I've acted in a role where I can't get an erection. In the horror film *Straightheads*, I had to writhe around, totally fackin' nude, in front of a 40-strong film crew, pretending my dick had gone soft while trying to bang my co-star Gillian Anderson. That was tough, as obviously, I didn't have any real-life experience of impotence to draw upon... ha-ha!

11 Tell us about playing Sid Vicious.

I was in a play in 2009 called Kurt and Sid, about a fictitious meeting, in which the Sex Pistols' bassist tries to talk Nirvana's Kurt Cobain out of committing suicide. I was supposed to be Sid fakin' Vicious, a punk icon... Man, the pressure! It was fackin' hard. Amazing, but so fackin' hard to do. There was only ever myself and one other actor on stage. We were on a set made to look like an attic filled with freaky handmade shrines and dismembered dolls, trying to remember hundreds of lines over two hours. I only forgot my words once, but it suddenly reminded me why doing movies is easier than performing in theatres. It went well, though.

12 In the last issue of *Bizarre*, we asked Skin from Skunk Anansie if she'd rather go out for a drink with you, or footballer Kieron Dyer. She chose you. How would you impress her?

If she wanted an experience she'd never forget, I'd take her to a crop circle. I saw some while presenting a documentary called *I Believe In UFOs*, and trust me, there's no fackin' way those things could be created by some geezer trampling a field in his Reebok Classics, or by skimming a wooden board about, or whatever. The corn's all woven together in some of them, and the patterns are so complex. It's so fackin' eerie. I'm not sure about aliens, but I couldn't work out how you could make those imprints as a human being.

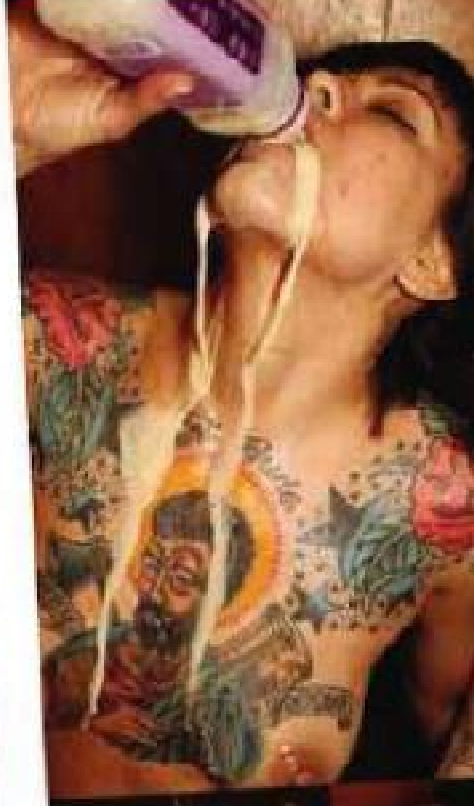
UNLUCKY

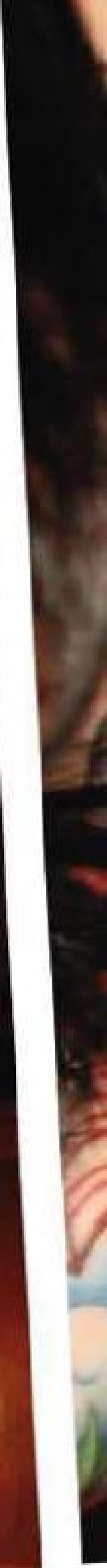
13 Your regular advice column in lads' mag *Zoo* was pulled last year after you suggested a reader should cut his ex's face with a knife to stop other blokes wanting her. Would you care to comment?

I was devastated by what happened. It was a joke in bad taste that got blown out of proportion and taken out of context. I've received a lot of criticism, especially from wimps hiding behind their anonymity on internet forums, but I'd never condone violence against women. I have a teenage daughter and a baby son with my long-term partner Joanne, who I'm in awe of for giving birth. I was raised by my nan. In short, I'm surrounded by incredible women, who I have nothing but respect for. I hope *Bizarre* readers can tell the difference between a stupid, black-humoured comment and my real beliefs. **Alix Fox**

Six pages of the sexiest alt.models, freakiest art and best body mods!

HOTSHOTS
>GIRLS





SPLOSH 'N' KECKS!

These wet'n'messy GodsGirls.com models will make you go gooey-eyed... and creamy-crotched

Fuck Kelis and the man from Del Monte – what these two chicks get up to with milkshakes and fruit juice blows the competition out of the water! They're models from cult alt.porn and erotica site GodsGirls.com, and their names are Rosie and Lee. *Bizarre*'s resident northern monkey, Foxy, says, "Mmm, if only they were pouring nice warm, strong cups of Rosie Lee all over themselves, too... Tea, plus tits, equals spaff! DD cups, plus teacups, equals yoinks!"

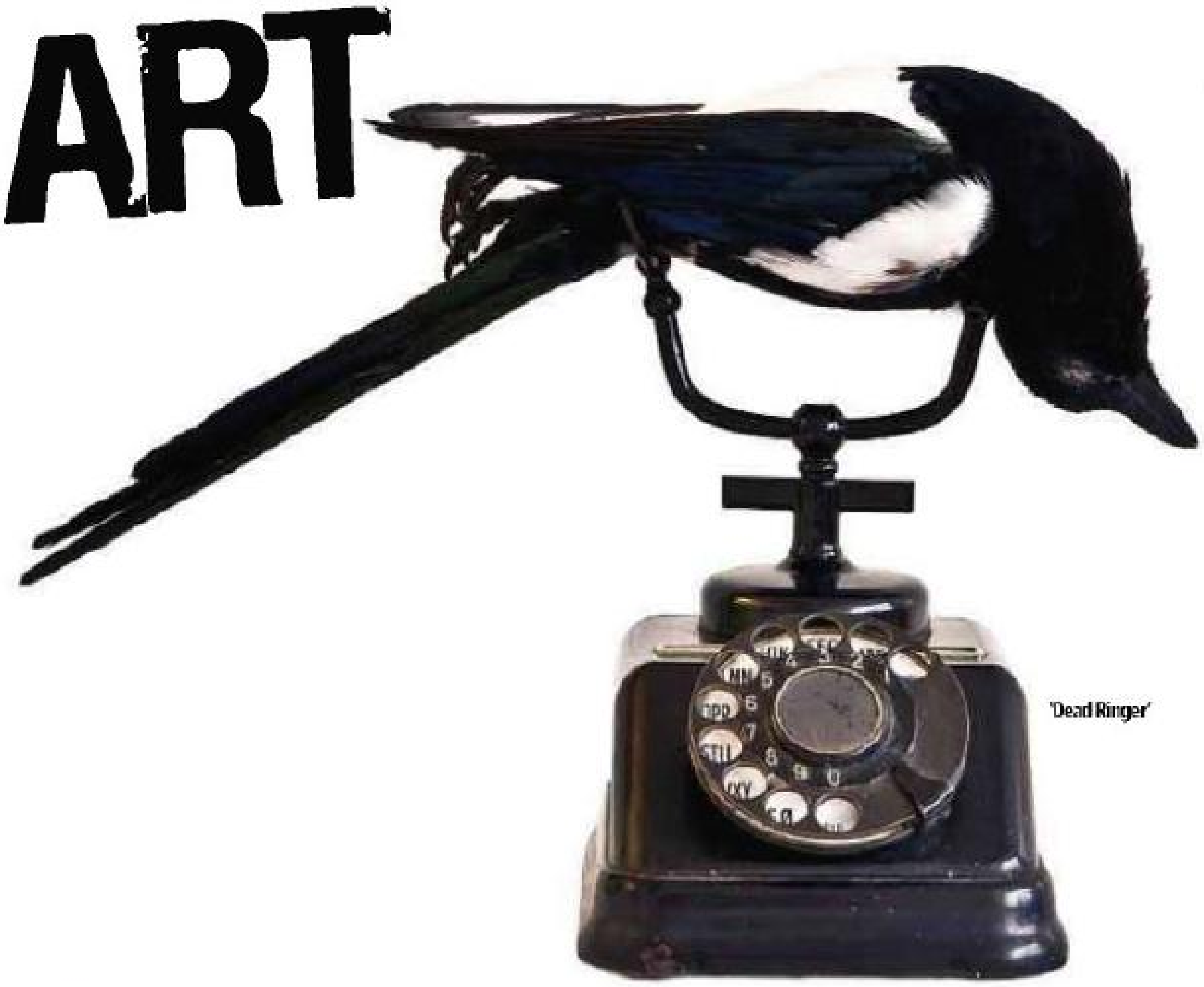
Want to try a spot of WAM (wet and messy) action yourself? Here are our top tips:

- **Goo up with brandy sauce!** The shops are full of leftovers from the festive period at knockdown prices. Buy 5-10 cheap cartons to get (in)decently mucky. It smells great, too!
- **Get in the gunge tank!** You can buy packets of powder that you mix with water to make exactly the same 'gunge' as seen on kids' TV programmes from Gungewarehouse.com. Each pack makes eight litres of goo, depending on how thick you want it to be, and costs from £4.50. Pro-sploshers also recommend an industrial powder thickener called Natrosol. Add children's poster paints for colour.
- **Never splosh with wallpaper paste!** It looks great, but contains chemicals that can irritate the skin.
- **Try wearing leggings!** Fill them with as much golden syrup, warm porridge, cake mix or trifle as they'll hold. Use bicycle clips to stop the gunk leaking all over your ankles!

See more pics of naughty girls at Godsgirls.com

PHOTOS: MATTHEW COOKE, GODSGIRLS.COM

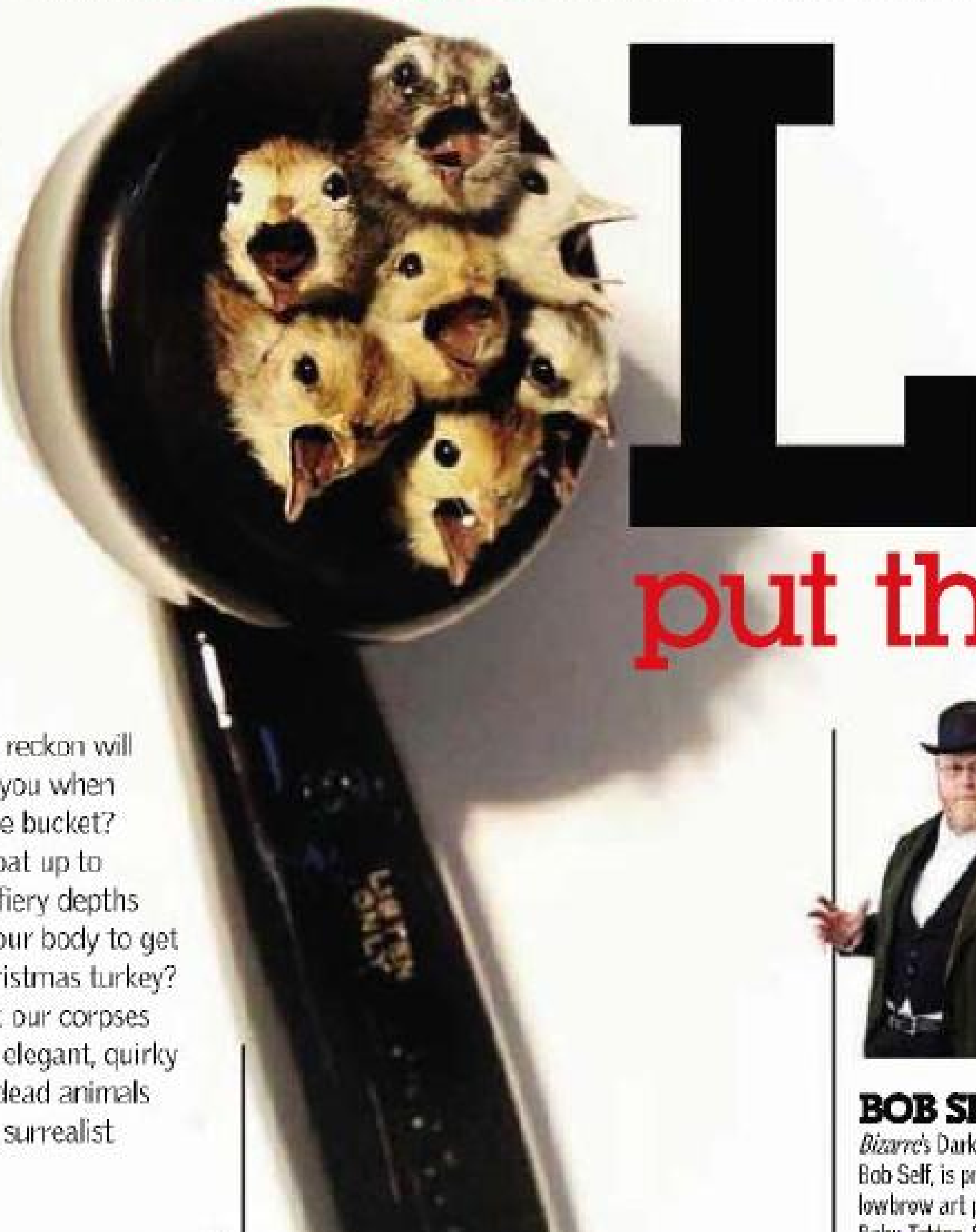
HOTSHOTS >DARK ART



'Dead Ringer'

Let boiling-hot artist **Polly Morgan's** taxidermy take you on a surreal flight of fancy

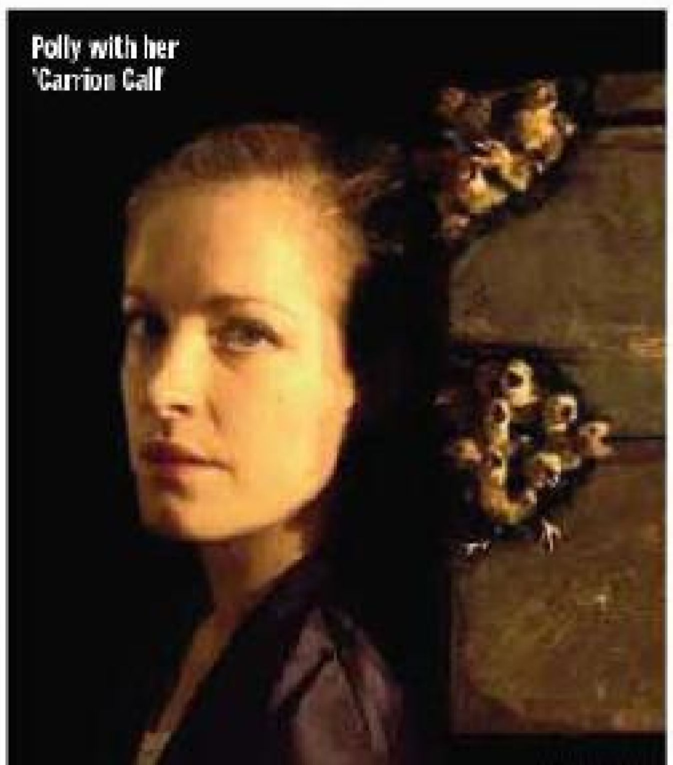
POLLY put the kestrel on



'Receiver'

What do you reckon will happen to you when you kick the bucket? Will you float up to heaven? Be doomed to the fiery depths of hell? Or would you like your body to get stuffed like last month's Christmas turkey?

Few of us can hope that our corpses will be displayed in such an elegant, quirky and original fashion as the dead animals turned into works of art by surrealist taxidermist Polly Morgan.



Polly with her 'Carrion Call'

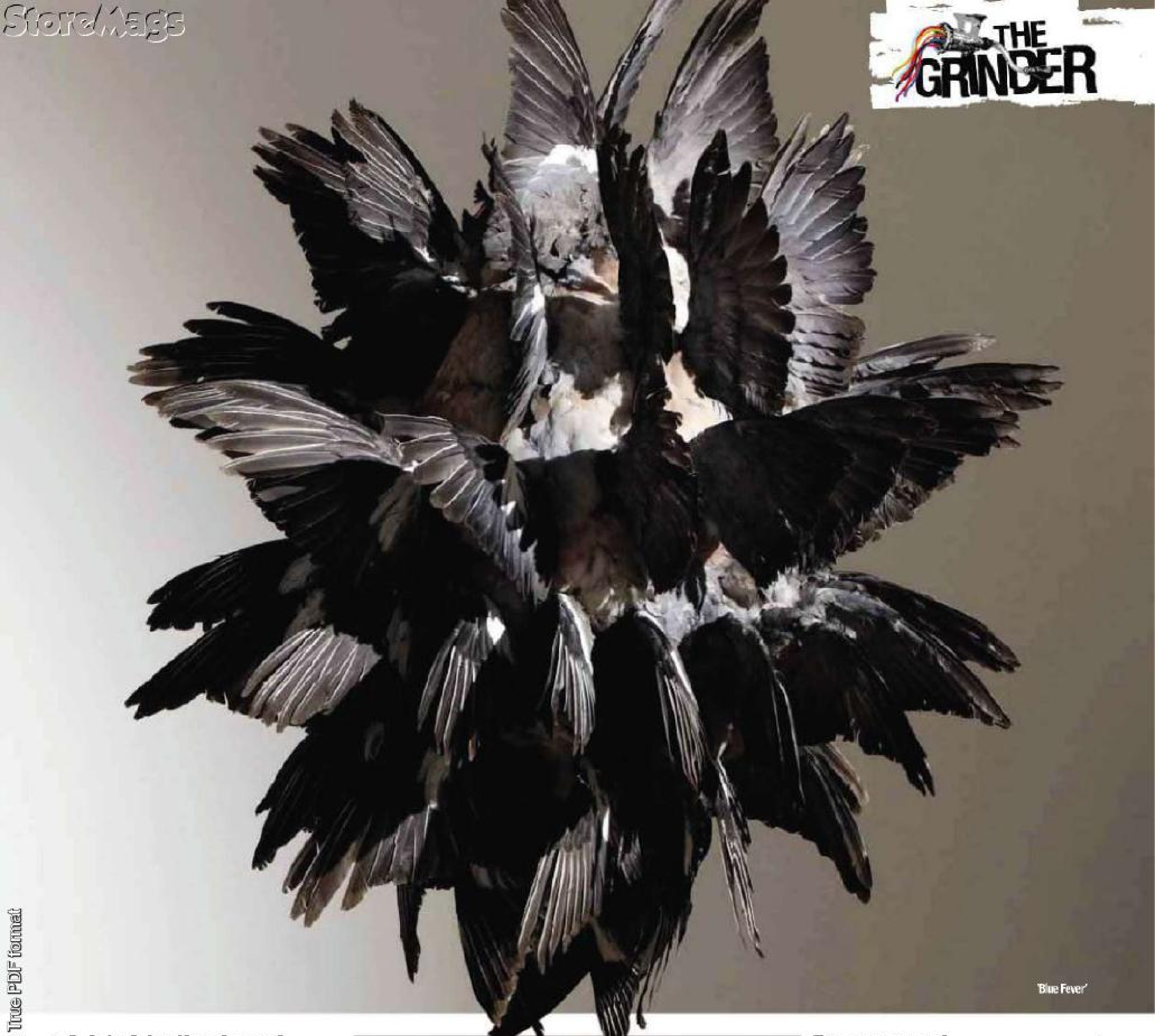
BOB SELF

Bizarre's Dark Art writer, Bob Self, is president of lowbrow art publishers Baby Tattoo. See more at Babytattoo.com and follow him on Twitter @MrBabyTattoo

The 30-year-old's "part sculpture, part butchery" creations are well-respected within the modern art world. While taxidermy is enjoying a cult revival, and an increasing number of artists are sewing up squirrels and ramming ravens full of foam, few of them achieve the kind of success that Polly has. She's worked with Banksy, and is currently exhibiting her work alongside Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Grayson Perry, and Jake and Dinos Chapman, at Chichester's Pallant House Gallery until 6 March.

Polly's career began in 2005, when she trained under the Scottish taxidermist George C Jamieson. His commissions range from producing stuffed birds for Famous Grouse whisky adverts, to immortalising a blind lady's dead Alsatian guide dog, so that she could still recognise him by feeling his stiff face.

"Making convincing taxidermy depends on how you build the armature – the model that gets stuffed inside the animal's skin – as well as ensuring that the wires holding the animal's limbs in place are bent correctly, and run along the bones accurately. The glass eyes also have to be set at the right angle," Polly tells us.

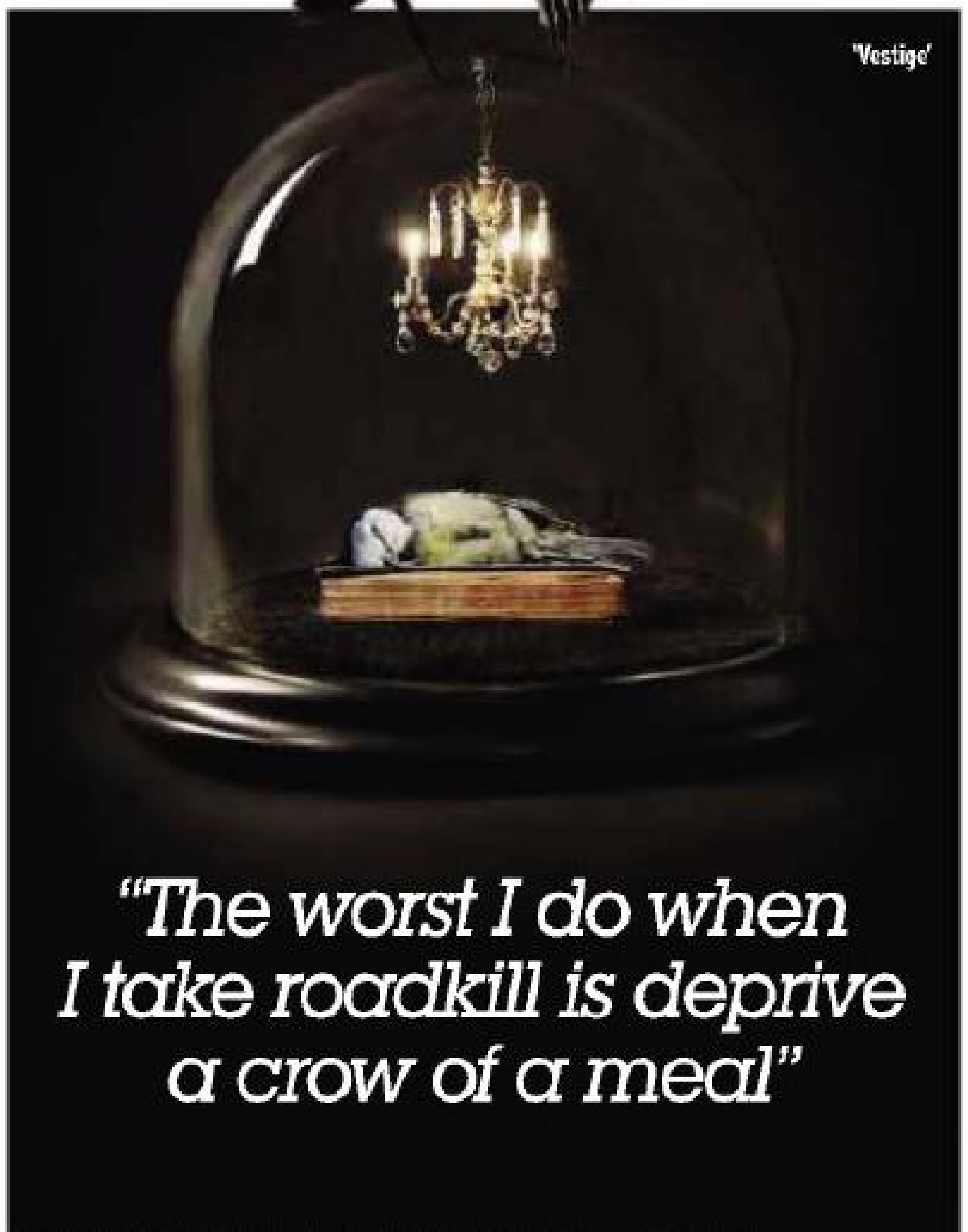


'Blue Fever'

A bird in the hand...

But although Polly's stuffed creatures are realistically rendered, they look like they're part of a dream. "While traditional taxidermy seeks to mimic an animal's natural habitat – by using fake rocks and moss, or painting a typical scene behind it – mine displaces animals from their normal environments and puts them in unexpected settings. I'm far more interested in showing people things they've never seen before", Polly explains.

Her recent show, *Psychopomps*, was inspired by the idea of mythical winged escorts, which carry the spirits of deceased critters into the afterlife. The hanging mobiles shown at her exhibition included a bright red bird perched inside a human ribcage and held aloft by a bunch of balloons, and a flock of finches hauling an empty birdcage into the air. Polly's also presented rats curled up in champagne glasses, quail chicks' heads pecking their way out of a telephone receiver, and white rabbits sleeping on magicians' hats.



'Vestige'

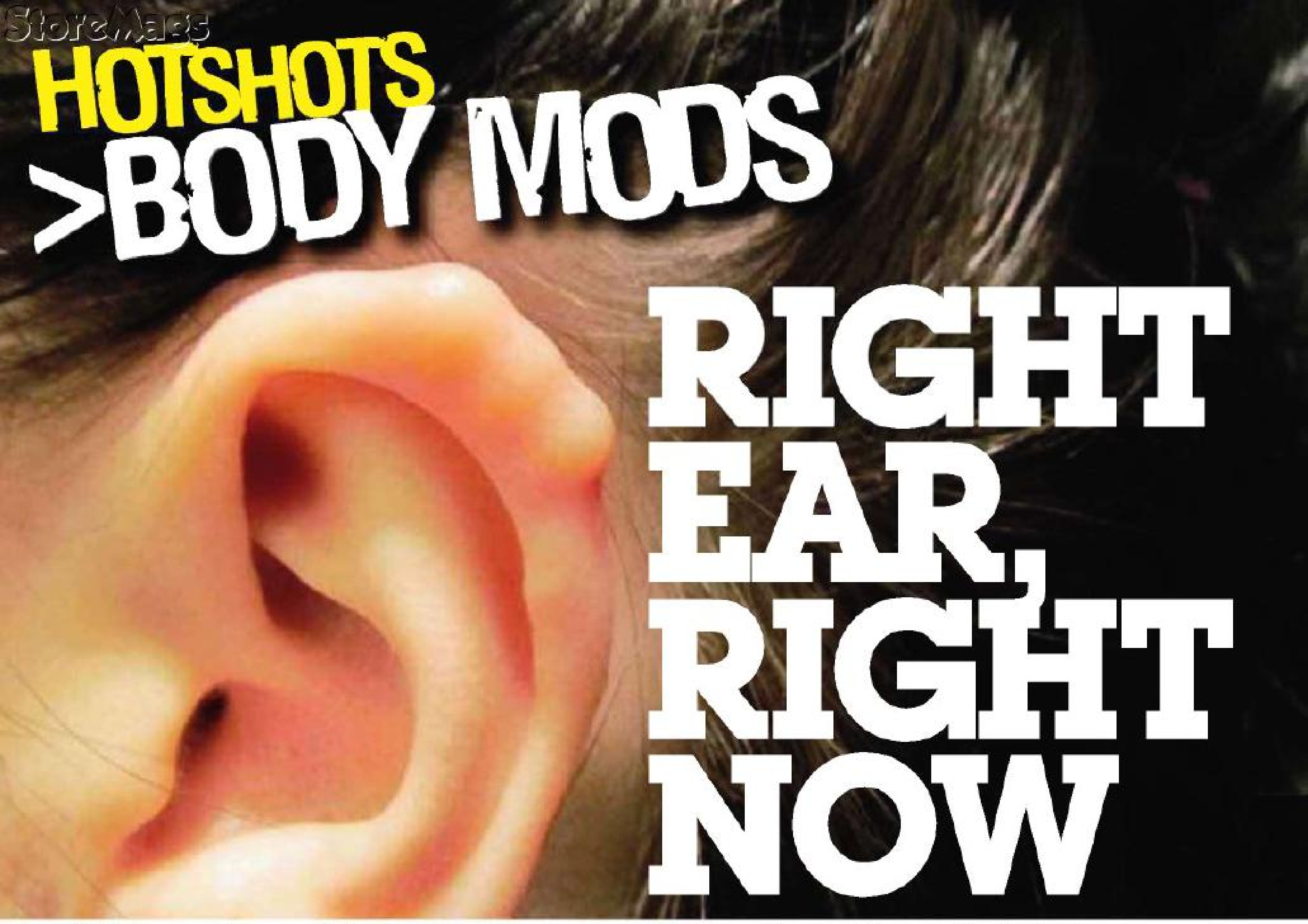
> "The worst I do when I take roadkill is deprive a crow of a meal"

Raven mad

But not everyone appreciates Polly's projects. "I've come across blog posts written by animal rights activists, slagging me off, and I've received the odd bit of hate-mail, but I find their arguments generally absurd," she says. "I never kill animals – to slay something in order to make it look alive again is perverse. Instead, I gather bodies through donations from vets and zoos after creatures have died natural or unpreventable deaths. I also collect roadkill, and take donations of dead pets. When the people who complain about my work discover it isn't cruel, they change tack and accuse me of making art that's disrespectful. That way of thinking foists human sentimentality on to animals. Magpies, ferrets and most other beasts don't gather at the graveside in mourning for their dead. In fact, they often eat them! The worst thing I'm doing when I pick up an animal from the side of the motorway is depriving a crow of a meal."

Bob Sell

For more, visit Pollymorgan.co.uk
A book of Polly's *Psychopomps* work is available at Hanchofvenison.com, priced £18



RIGHT EAR, RIGHT NOW

Subdermal implants in the upper ear are a new way to modify your lugholes!

Get a lobe of this! New mod procedures are developing all the time, and now you can have a ball with your ears... or three! Gisella Rose, pictured on these pages, decided to get subdermal implants in her upper ear (helix) as an alternative to ear-pointing. They were done by husband Dominick, a professional body piercer and modder at Starlight Tattoo in New Jersey, USA.

"I already have several tattoos, piercings, and a heart-shaped subdermal implant in my hand – plus I perform play piercing and suspension in shows, and stick skewers in my cheeks – so I'm not afraid of pain or hardcore body mods," says Gisella. "However, while I think that pointed ears look great when they're done correctly and heal well, the procedure can be quite risky: you have to slice a triangular chunk out of the top of the ear, and then stitch the two raw edges of flesh together to give a spiked look. It's a traumatic experience for the body."

Gisella was worried she could end up with chunks of scar tissue, and that it'd be difficult to reverse the effect if she changed her mind. "Subdermal implants in the helix look far more delicate, subtle and feminine, and tend to heal more successfully and predictably," she says.

GET OUTTA EAR!

When Dominick first performed the helix procedure on a client, he implanted Teflon beads, but they didn't work very well. "They were too hard, and didn't have enough 'give' to allow for accidental knocks or bashes," he frowns. "After a while they pushed their way out, or 'migrated' back out of the client's skin."

For Gisella's ear, Dominick implanted three 4mm balls crafted from silicone, which is softer. "She's had them in for over three months now, and they look and feel great," he says.

To implant the silicone balls, Dominick first made a small scalpel incision on the outside edge of Gisella's ear. "If you start from the outside and push the beads in towards the head, rather than working from the scalp outwards, it gives you a lot more room for manoeuvre," Dominick says.

> *"The sensation of the balls being forced in was unpleasant"*

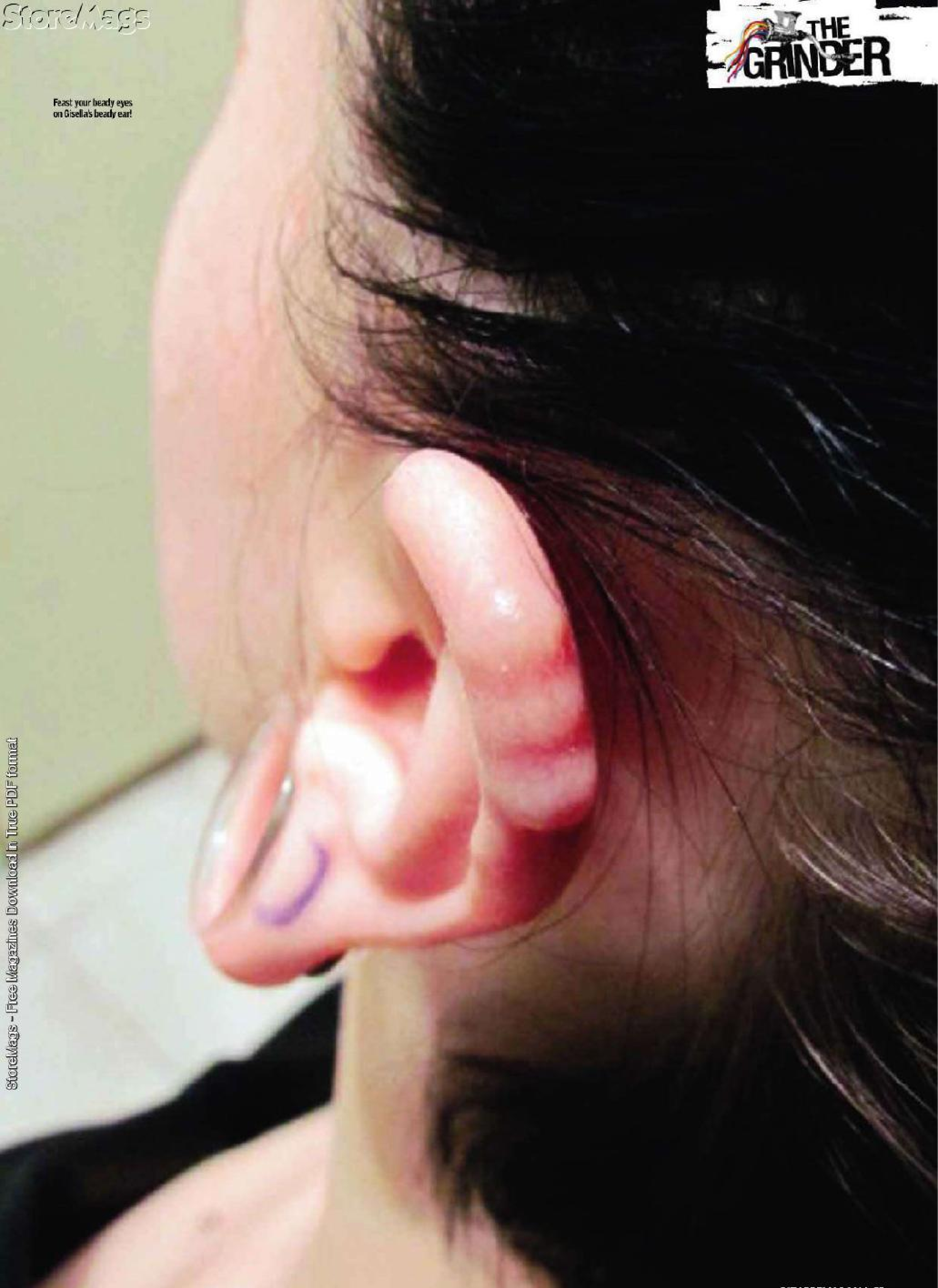
Having made a hole in his wife's ear, Dominick enlisted a colleague to poke in a 'dermal elevator': a tiny spatula-like tool which lifts up the skin and tissue to make a gap into which an implant can be inserted. "The helix is such a small, fiddly area to implant into, and the skin is so tight there, that you really can't do the job on your own," he says. "While my co-worker held my wife's ear flesh open, I slid in the three beads before stitching up the entry wound."

EAR ACHE

The whole procedure took around 10-15 minutes. "The initial incision was the worst part," grimaces Gisella, "although admittedly it wasn't a pleasant sensation feeling the balls being forced in, either. That was more about pressure than pain though, as the skin's so taut over the helix cartilage. There was a bit of blood on my pillow the next morning, and I had bruising and swelling for about four days, but now it feels comfortable and looks awesome. My body's accepted the implants well, and I don't get the feeling it'll reject them or that they'll migrate in the future – I think this is a mod I'll have forever. I can't wait to get the other ear done!"

Next, Dominick wants to experiment with implanting long, curved pieces of silicone into ear helixes. "I want to carve them with ripples, ridges and patterns to give a subtle, stunning, alien-like effect," he says. Eargasmic!

Find out more about Dominick at Invisibleself.com
See more of the luscious performer Gisella Rose at Ultravixens.net/miss_rose



Feast your beady eyes on Gisella's beady ear!

BUY CURIOUS

Shop-a-doodle-do!

Fun Factory Cobra men's wanking device

£84.99, Sh-womenstore.com

Named after the sports car, this slick, waterproof, rechargeable toy has twin motors: stick your dick in it and the vibrations will get you off without you even having to pump. Just try not to think about Jeremy Clarkson's heinous jeans while you're at it.

Six-Sided Die latex vacuum cube

From $900 (£580) Elasticaengineering.com

The ultimate vacuum toy for fans of total rubber immersion games. Get sucked in and roll a sex... er, a six... every time!

Custom kigurumi suits

From £40 for kids and £100 for adults Customkigurumi.com

Last year *Bizarre* predicted that all-in-one animal suits, called kigurumi, or kigus for short, would be huge. They're even bigger and wilder for 2011. This company can make you *anything*, be it a fox in a tweed jacket, a Pokémon, a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle or a sequin-spotted leopard.

Sushi Pillows

From $44.99 (£32), Thinkgeek.com

Hard up after Xmas? Can't afford your usual face-sitting session with a BBW dominatrix? Relive the sensation of being smothered by plus-sized labia on the cheap by burying your head in a giant, plush piece of raw salmon.

Excellent Source of Sparkles
Radiant Farms
UNICORN MEAT
Product of Ireland
Magic in Every Bite!

Canned Unicorn Meat
$11.99 (£7.62), Thinkgeek.com
OK, so this can actually contains a dismembered soft toy, but you could always create your own mythical meat by dusting a block of SPAM with safe-to-eat sparkles from **Edible-glitter.co.uk.**

Bacon Soda and Bacon Gravy
From $5.99 (£3.80), Store.baconsalt.com
The 1990s gave us 'Parklife', but the noughties were all about Porklife, and the trend for all things bacon-flavoured looks set to continue into 2011. Guzzle enough gammon-infused fizz and you might be able to spunk out your own piggy-scented man-gravy from your mighty pork sword.

BACON J&D's GRAVY
COUNTRY STYLE
JONES
BACON FLAVORED SODA

Meat 'n two veg chopping board
£19.99, Find-me-a-gift.co.uk
Combine hygiene and humour with this phallic chopping board. It's got separable knob-shaped 'meat' and nuts-shaped 'veg' sections, so you don't get bloody bits of raw gristle all over your mange tout, or what have you.

WIN!

A TREASURE CHEST STUFFED WITH 'BUY CURIOUS' GOODIES!

Will you take anything if it's free? Enter our competition to win a load of products from these pages! Fill in this coupon (photocopies are fine) and send it to: Alix Fox, Bizarre, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, for your chance to win. Yep, you gotta use old school snail mail!

Name:

Address:

Email:

USE THIS SPACE TO WRITE A RUDE LIMERICK OF YOUR OWN DEVISING. AND DRAW A COCK AND BALLS TOO, BECAUSE IT'S TRADITIONAL.

FOR FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS, SEE P5. COMPETITION CLOSES 15 FEBRUARY 2011 AND THE JUDGES' DECISION IS FINAL. WINNERS WILL BE CHOSEN ACCORDING TO HOW MUCH THEY MAKE US LAUGH. BIZARRE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PRINT YOUR SILLY DRAWINGS IN THE NAME OF ENTERTAINMENT.

Use promo code **BIZARRE** at checkout for *10% off* of your next order!

Left to right: Leopard lace-up dress, sizes S-2XL; Ribcage L/S Burnout Top, sizes S-2XL.

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IF YOU THINK MY ATTITUDE STINKS YOU SHOULD SMELL MY FINGERS.
I USED TO FUCK DEAD WOMEN TILL SOME ROTTEN CUNT SPLIT ON ME.
CAN'T FEED 'EM DON'T BREED 'EM
DRUG TESTING IN PROGRESS
FREEDOM FOR TOOTING
HAPPY ENDING MASSAGE PARLOR
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www.shocktees.com 300+ designs online!
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THE WORLD'S #1 ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY

YOURBIZARRE

Join over **11,000 members** at Bizarre's **FREE** networking site, **YOURBIZARRE.COM**, and check out the next 12 pages dedicated to **YOU, YOU, YOU!** ➡

YOURBIZARRE IN THE MAG…

34 Junk Mail
YOUR letters, pictures and ranting, with the best of your Tweets, Facebook updates and YourBizarre comments!

37 Proud To Be Different
YOUR stories and campaign updates!

38 Parties
YOUR freakiest parties! This month, grab your raygun and goggles for the cog-tastic Barcelona steampunk convention!

40 Your Body Art
YOUR ink'n'iron!

42 Ultra Vixens
Vote for **YOUR** favourite Ultra Vixen! Who'll win? You decide!

Ultra Vixens

Parties

Your Body Art

Join us online at YOURBIZARRE

It's FREE!

Create your profile

Share pics, vids & blogs

Chat with other fiends

ONLINE LIVE CHAT

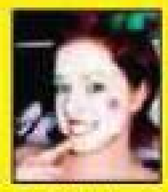
Chat with the folk who make *Bizarre*!

EVERY FRIDAY AT 4PM

DAVE_KELSALL

KATE_HODGES

BIZARREPICS


SKULL_SMASHER

ALIX_FOX

ELEANOR_GOODMAN

DR_BLACKTHORN

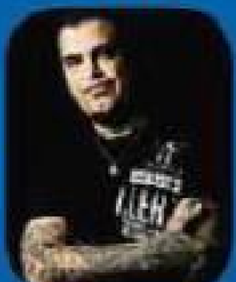
Attention!

Each month, one of Bizarre's best friends pops onto YourBizarre to chat to all you freaks and geeks. For the latest updates on who's in the hot-seat this month, head to Bizarremag.com

Here are some of the stars who've already appeared in the YourBizarre chatroom for your entertainment…

April Flores!

Phil Kyle!



Masuimi Max!

Contact Bizarre

EMAIL AUNTIEDEN@DENNIS.CO.UK
POST BIZARRE, 30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD
TEXT 82189* STARTING YOUR MESSAGE **BIZ LETTER**

I'M AUNTIE DEN, YOURBIZARRE'S COMMUNITY EDITOR! DON'T BE FOOLED BY MY PLAYBOY LOOKS – I'M A MEAN, LEAN, KILLING MACHINE, AND I'M HERE TO KEEP YOU LOT IN LINE. YOU'VE BEEN WARNED!

Add Bizarre at

myspace.com — MYSPACE.COM/BIZARREMAGAZINE
facebook — TINYURL.COM/BIZFACEBOOK
twitter — TWITTER.COM/BIZARREMAGAZINE

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* EACH MESSAGE COSTS 25P PLUS STANDARD NETWORK RATE. FOR HELP/ENQUIRIES EMAIL MOBILE@DENNIS.CO.UK, OR WRITE TO: MOBILE DEPARTMENT, DENNIS PUBLISHING, 30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD

BIZARRE Junk mail

WE'LL TAKE ANY OLD CRAP!
SEND US YOUR STUFF!

EDITED BY AUNTIE DEN
AUNTIEDEN@DENNIS.CO.UK

FREE BOOZE!

Every month, the writer of our Dumpstar! letter wins a bottle of Sailor Jerry Spiced Rum, which will warm the cockles of the hardest of hearts!

Sailorjerry rum.com

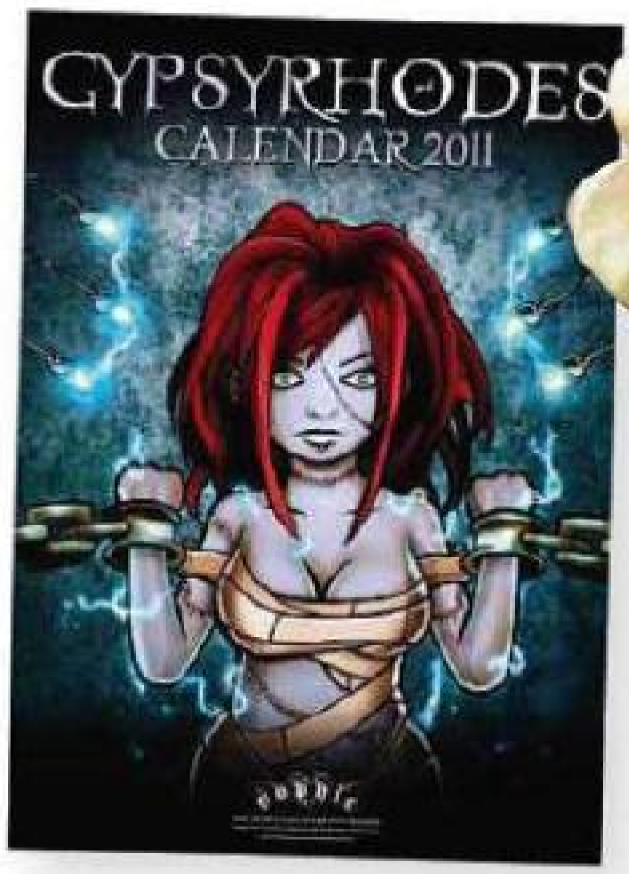
SAILOR JERRY SPICED RUM

CALENDAR GIRL

I'm a big fan of 2009 Ultra Vixen winner, Gypsy Rhodes, and I wanted to shout about her new 2011 Calendar (below)! It costs £8.99 and is available to buy from her website, **Gypsyrhodes.co.uk**.

The proceeds will be going the Sophie Lancaster Foundation, which I know she fully supports. She's awesome and deserves some kudos in your mag for the work she's doing.

Lochan Oridium, by email



BODY ART PHWOAR!

I was so ecstatic to see my tattoo in *Body Art 4*, I had to shout about it on Twitter and post a pic!

Kitty Davies, Twitter

Auntie Den says: Shameless plug alert! You can grab *Body Art 4* from Amazon.co.uk and Magbooks.com

KiTTY DaVIEs

Dumpstar!

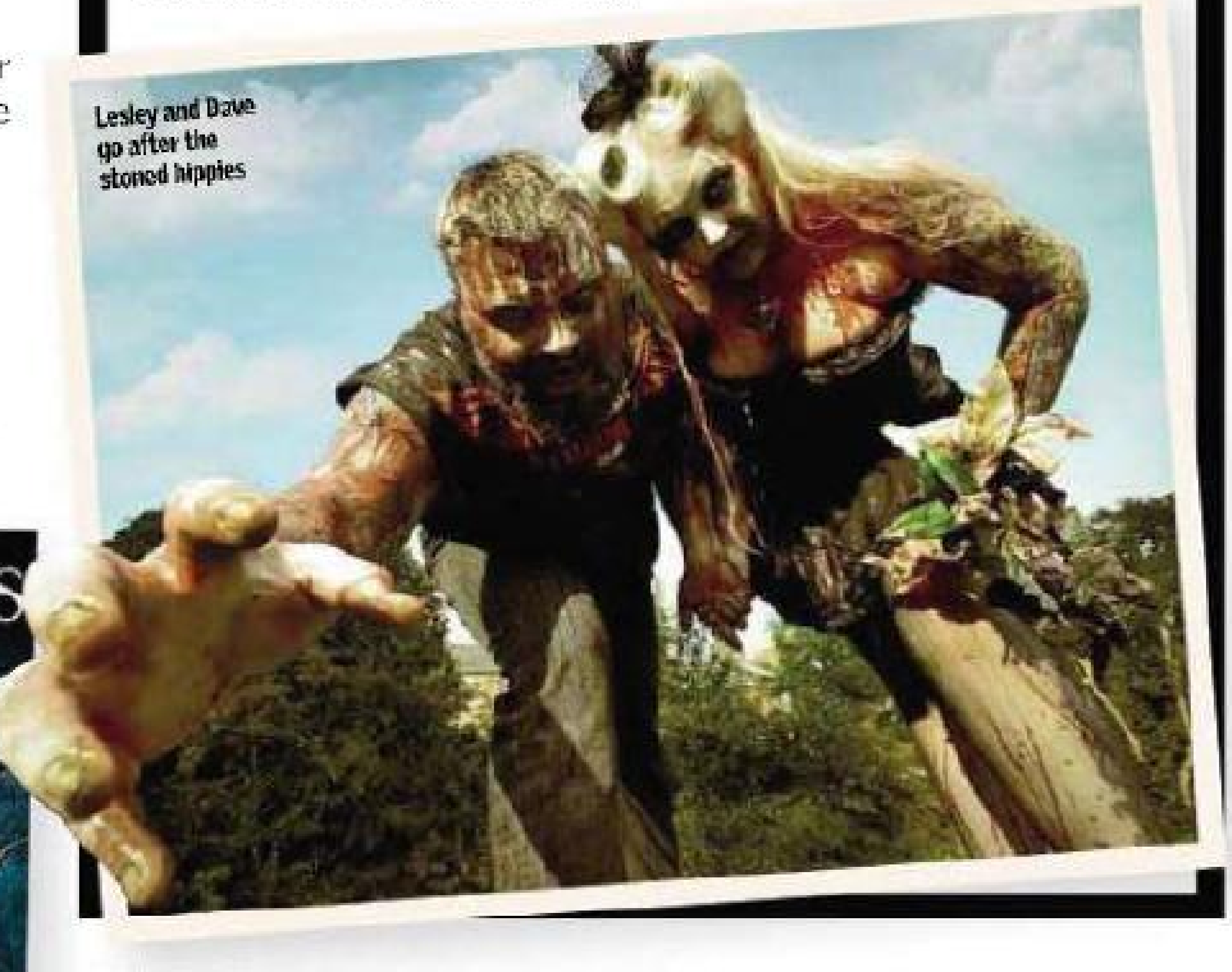
WELL DONE! YOU WIN THE BOOZE!

TIL UNDEATH DO US PART...

You kindly published our Las Vegas wedding photos 10 years ago in *Bizarre* and, in true zombie style, we've included a picture from our recent photoshoot to celebrate 10 gory years of marriage! The pic was taken by the lovely Kayla Wren of Ren photography for our anniversary in November 2010. We're long-term subscribers of *Bizarre* and have every single issue. Keep the gore flowing!

Lesley and Dave Dent, by email

Auntie Den says: Congratulations on your anniversary. Get some life back with that rum! Your picture reminds me of a pagan wedding I went to, back in my youth. The bride got moss stuck to her lady flaps when she went into the woods for a piss, and the groom got ticks on his wanger. Oh, Lordy!



Lesley and Dave go after the stoned hippies

CALLING ALL FREAKS

I'm making two music videos and I need the following: a boogieman, a dead person, a mouse, tortoise, hare, pirate, effeminate vampire, butler, maid, werewolf, snail, caterpillar, leprechauns, goblins, gnomes, alligators, 12ft lady, the three bears, a chorus line, butchers, cheerleaders/sports team, fire-eaters, circus acts, and any bizarre and interesting people to make a crowd scene. Unfortunately, there will be no payment, but it should be a good laugh making them, and hopefully some of the cast may be involved in the live shows. Filming takes place in the Birmingham area during February and March. If you're interested, please drop me a line and a photo at beebeinfo@yahoo.com

Chris, by email

PANTS TO VOMIT

We think the stains have more to do with dark back-passages

After a 90-day break from drinking, I headed out to the work's Christmas do full of festive spirit. I started off with a few pints before hitting the venue, then had a few more once inside. Then I started drinking vodka and orange, but I wasn't feeling any effect, so I decided to up the ante and knocked back neat shots. I'm told I started to trip over things and then I went outside for what seemed like hours. It took me a whole day afterwards to realise that I'd covered my trousers with puke (above).

It might not have helped that I'd had a sauna session before I went out, and the last thing I ate was a turkey curry at 2pm.

Let this be a warning to all about the dangers of laying off booze for more than three days.

Roger Daultry, by email

I ♥ 'I ♥' T-SHIRTS

My mate has an obsession with octopuses and when I saw *Bizarre's* 'I Love Tentacle Porn' T-shirt (below),

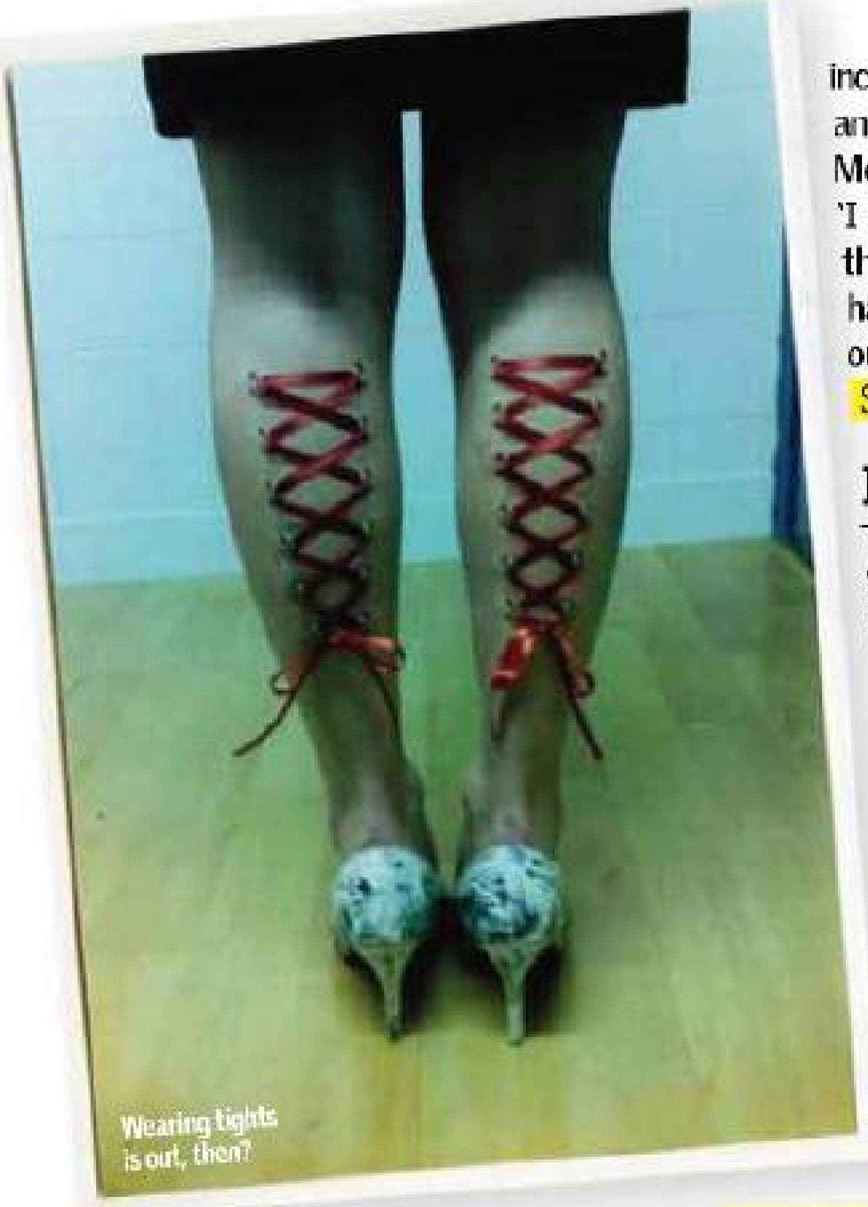
And we heart pearl necklaces

I ♥ TENTACLE PORN

I nearly creamed my pants at how much I wanted it. Plus, I'm sick of seeing 14-year olds wearing 'I Love Madina Lake' T-shirts.

MartiMcFly, YourBizarre

Auntie Den says: There are more I Heart *Bizarre* T-shirts available, including 'I Heart Meat' and 'I Heart Girls With Moustaches'. They took the 'I Heart Auntie Den' one off the site because they couldn't handle the traffic. Check out the whole range at **Shotdeadinthehead.com**.


Wearing tights is out, then?

LACED LEGS

This is my apprentice, Vanessa Naomi White, who works at my studio in Loughborough, Forbidden Pleasures Piercing (left).

I've pierced her before, but this is the latest and most challenging one I've attempted. The whole procedure took two hours to complete, and Vanessa braved all 24 piercings during one sitting. We think the result is outstanding!

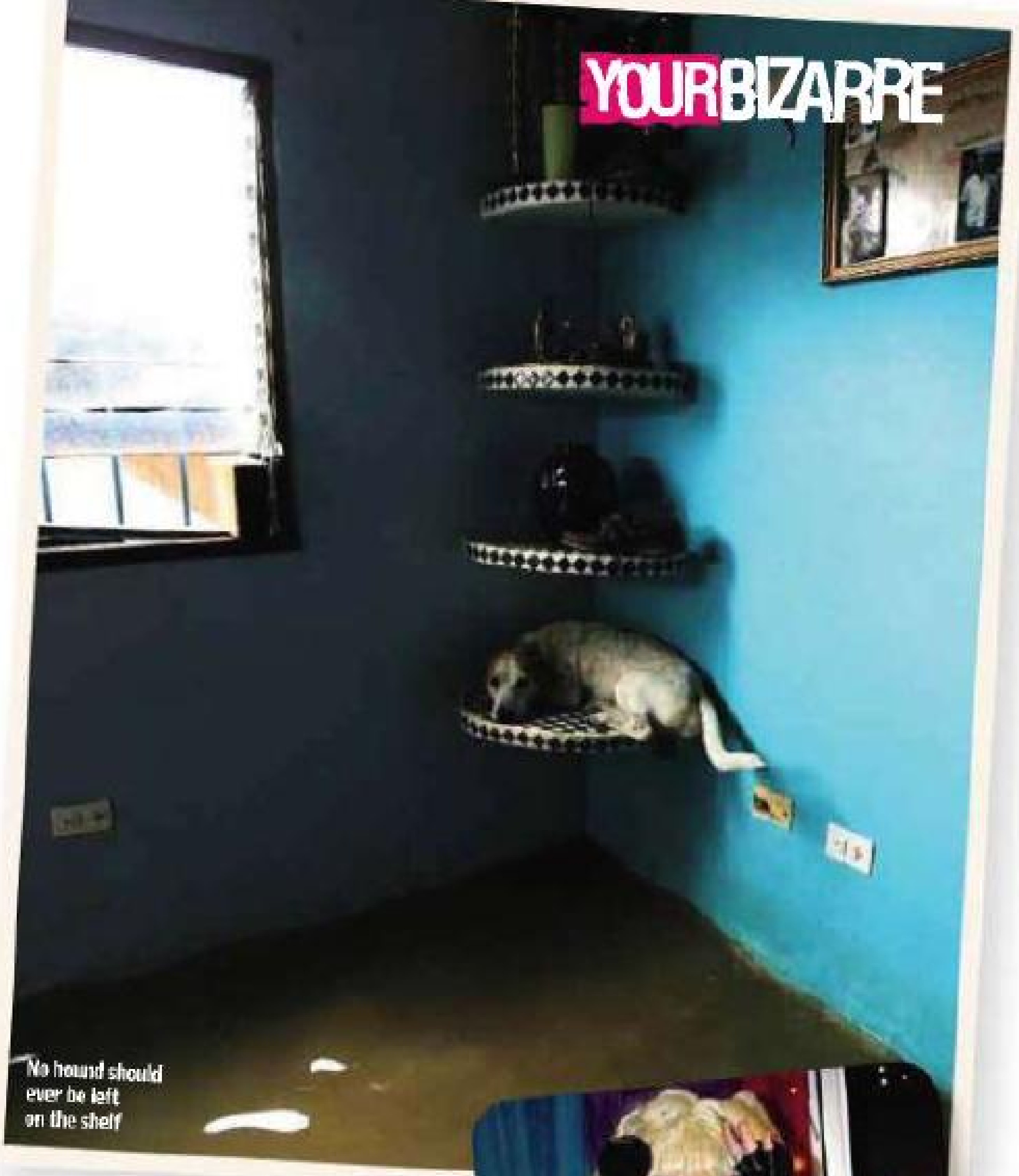
Griff Griffiths, Loughborough

DOG ON A SHELF

I've been scouring the interweb for a picture of a dog on a shelf. It's a simple request, and I thought my favourite mag might have one lying around. Please, *Bizarre*, if you could print one it'd make me extremely happy.

Cyril SmearTest, by email

Auntie Den says: It must be your lucky day, Cyril. We asked our picture guru, Tom Broadbent, if he could help, and he scratched his beard (disturbing the flies), stomped down to his dusty cellar, muttering under his breath, and returned an hour later with a dubious-looking ham sandwich in one hand and this picture (above) in the other. We also have one of a cat staring out the window if anyone's interested.


No hound should ever be left on the shelf

PICTURE: PA PHOTOS

LADY GAGA

This is me dressed as Lady Gaga (right). Just in case you can't see it, I'd like to draw your attention to the massive dong hanging from my pants.

Kadaver, by email

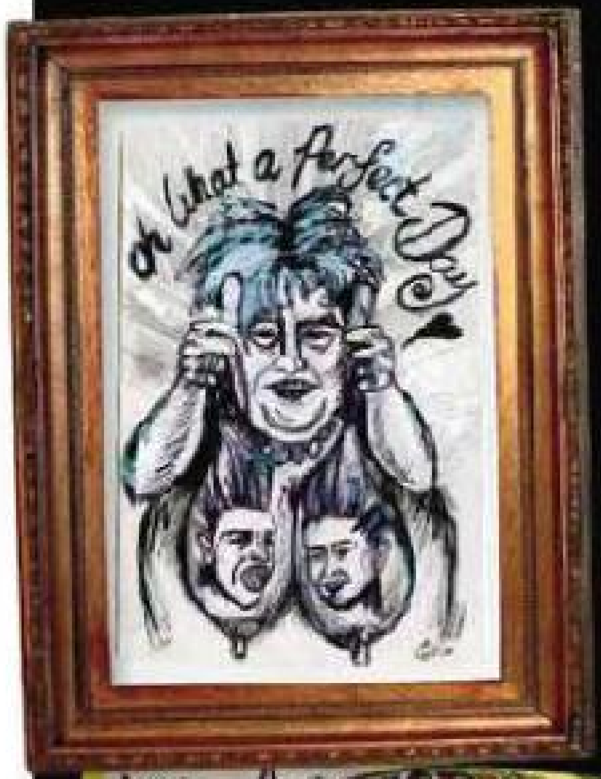
The Fame Monster pops out from hiding

BUY CURIOUS

Everyone's a winner...

... *well, not really!*

In *Bizarre 170*, we asked you to sketch out the worst tattoo you could possibly imagine. Here's your line-up of ink that stinks...

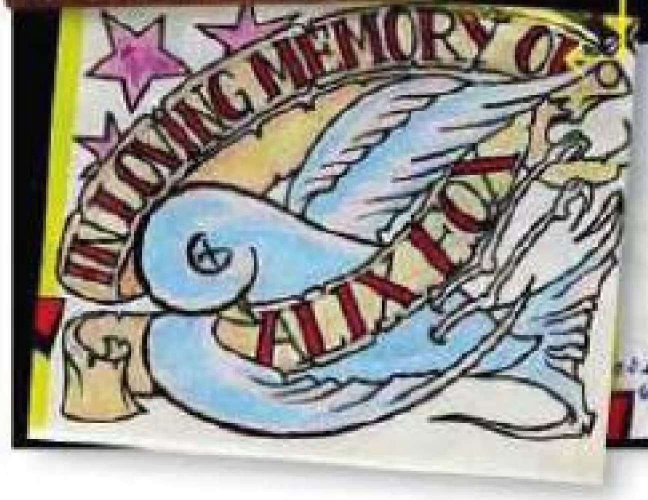

Oh What a Perfect Day

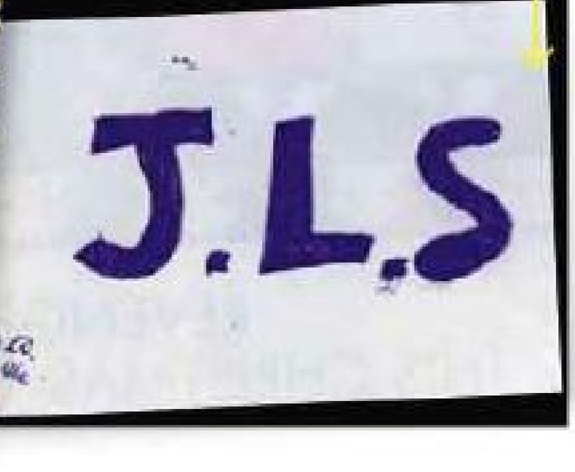
←WINNER!

Ona Borroff, Nottinghamshire, stole the show with her hideous take on Susan Boyle sporting Jedward on her pendulous milkers.

RUNNERS-UP

A bit of Foxy bum-licking from **Latty, Cumbria,** caught our attention, as did a nod to reputable musical group, JLS, executed expertly by **Martin Cameron, Aberdeenshire.** Drop anchor at **p33** and see what shite we want you to draw this month!



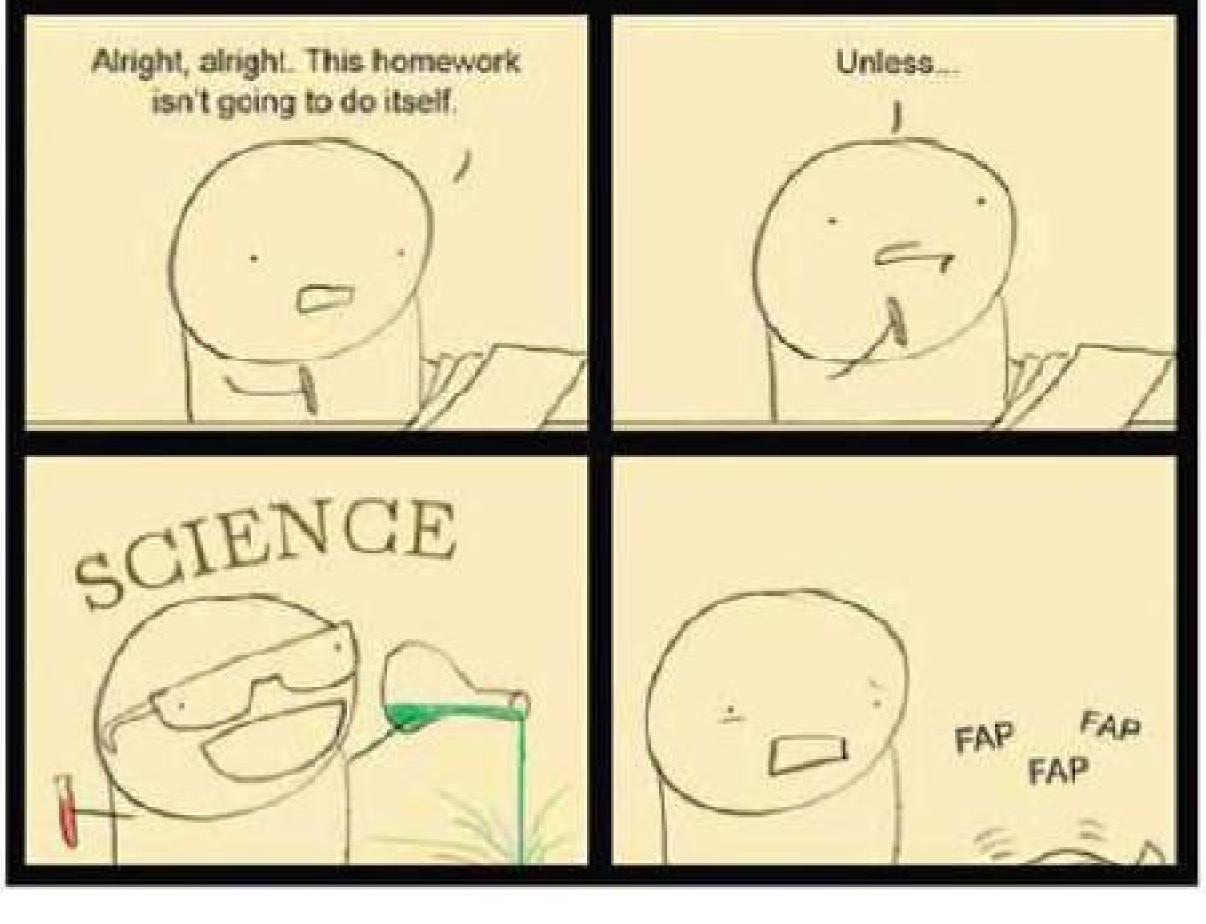


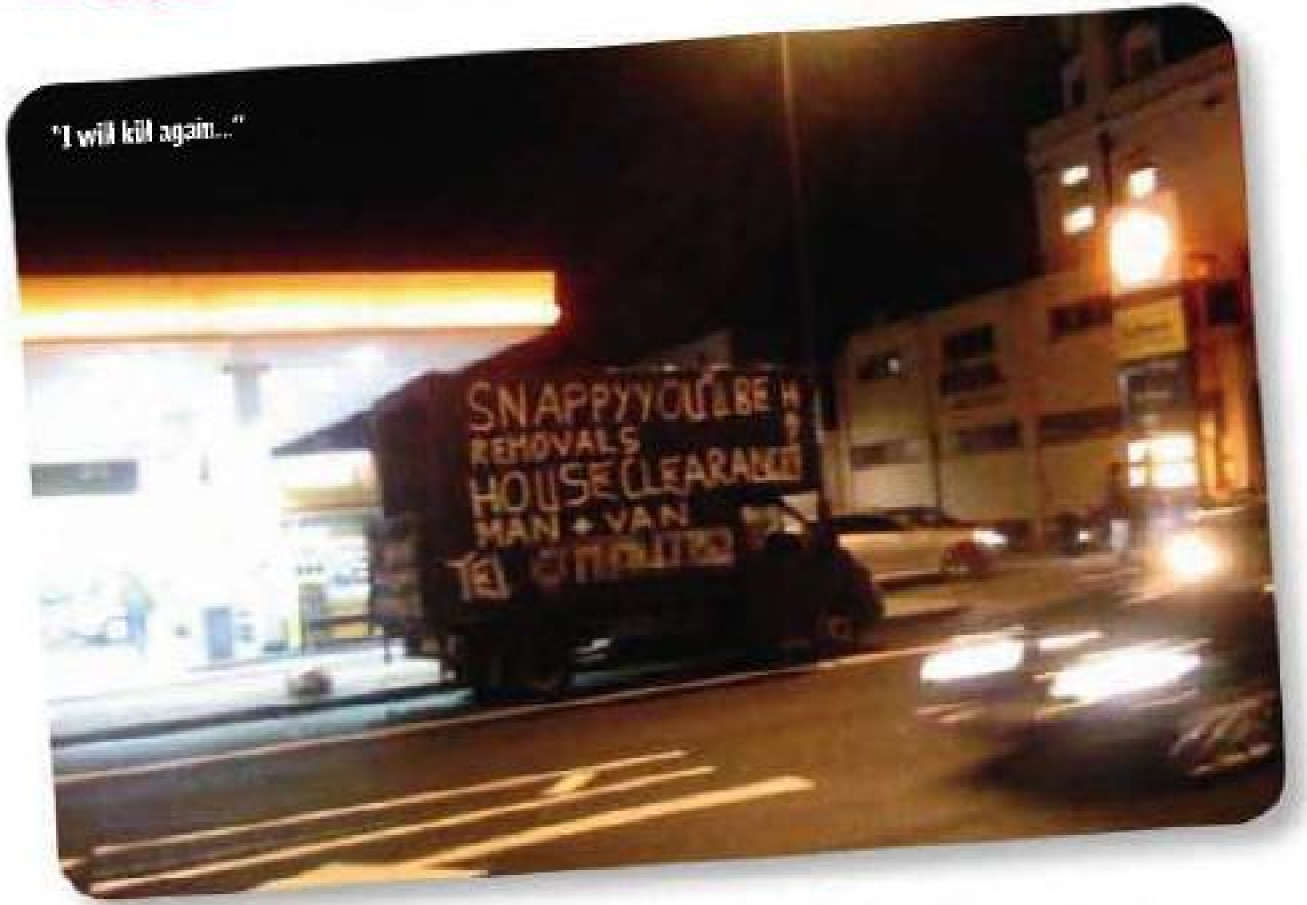
The Warehouse

By Carl Huber

WAREHOUSECOMIC.COM

DO IT YOURSELF, BUT WATCH FOR PAPER CUTS


Alright, alright. This homework isn't going to do itself.
Unless...
SCIENCE
FAP
FAP
FAP


"I will kill again..."

DODGY VAN MAN

In *Bizarre 171*, you printed a picture of a van with 'flange lubrication' emblazoned on the side of it, and asked people to send in more. I thought you'd like the professional lengths that this van owner has gone to, to advertise his house clearance business (above).

Judging by the serial-killer handwriting, I'd let hell freeze over before he got his hands on my Ming vase.

Ruben Redneck, by email

TOY GLORY

I just wanted to alert geeky *Bizarre* readers to this wonderful treasure trove of collectible toys I found in the catacombs of the Stables Market in Camden, London, the last time I went there (below). It's a wall-to-wall action-figure wank-off! I nearly significantly reduced the value of a Dalek model and a plastic Chewbacca.

Tom Craddock, by email

JARVIS PECKER

Is it me, or does this not prove that Jarvis Cocker (right) found an alternative way of making cash after Pulp disappeared from the limelight on a nine-year hiatus?

Nads, by email

twitter

Your sweet tweets...

My interview with *Bizarre* magazine is done. I threatened to kill Cliff Richard and mentioned smacking kids around 10 seconds in.
@misterjoeblack

I must go and find somewhere selling *Bizarre*. I need my fix to keep my mind off exams and the lack of heating in the library!
@Myrina90

Someone near civilization, please send me new *Bizarre* or I'll be forced to read *Wuthering Heights*.
@Angelfxck11

How weird is that I had a nosebleed last night, with clear blood, for about an hour?
@DebraAngel

facebook

Omg! *Bizarre*! That 'bust' of the Queen in 'The Grinder' (*Bizarre 170*). It was fucking awesomely creepy, and my boyfriend's face was priceless.
Esmie Dawson

Love the mag. It has the greatest fanbase – people who know who they are and, more importantly, are proud of who they are.
Trey Collins

Scott thinks he should boycott *Bizarre* until they host something in Glasgow! Fuckers!
Scott Logan

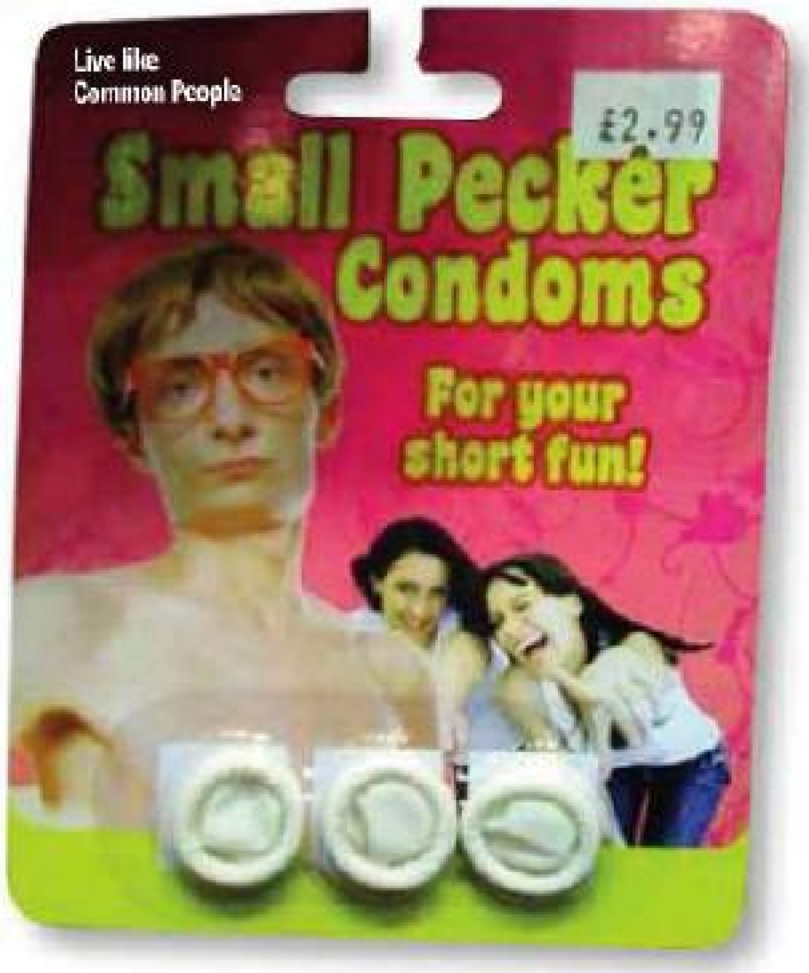
Just reading the John Waters interview in *Bizarre 170*, and you have the pics of his movies mixed up! You have *Pink Flamingos* under *Hairspray* and vice versa!
Audrey Cameron

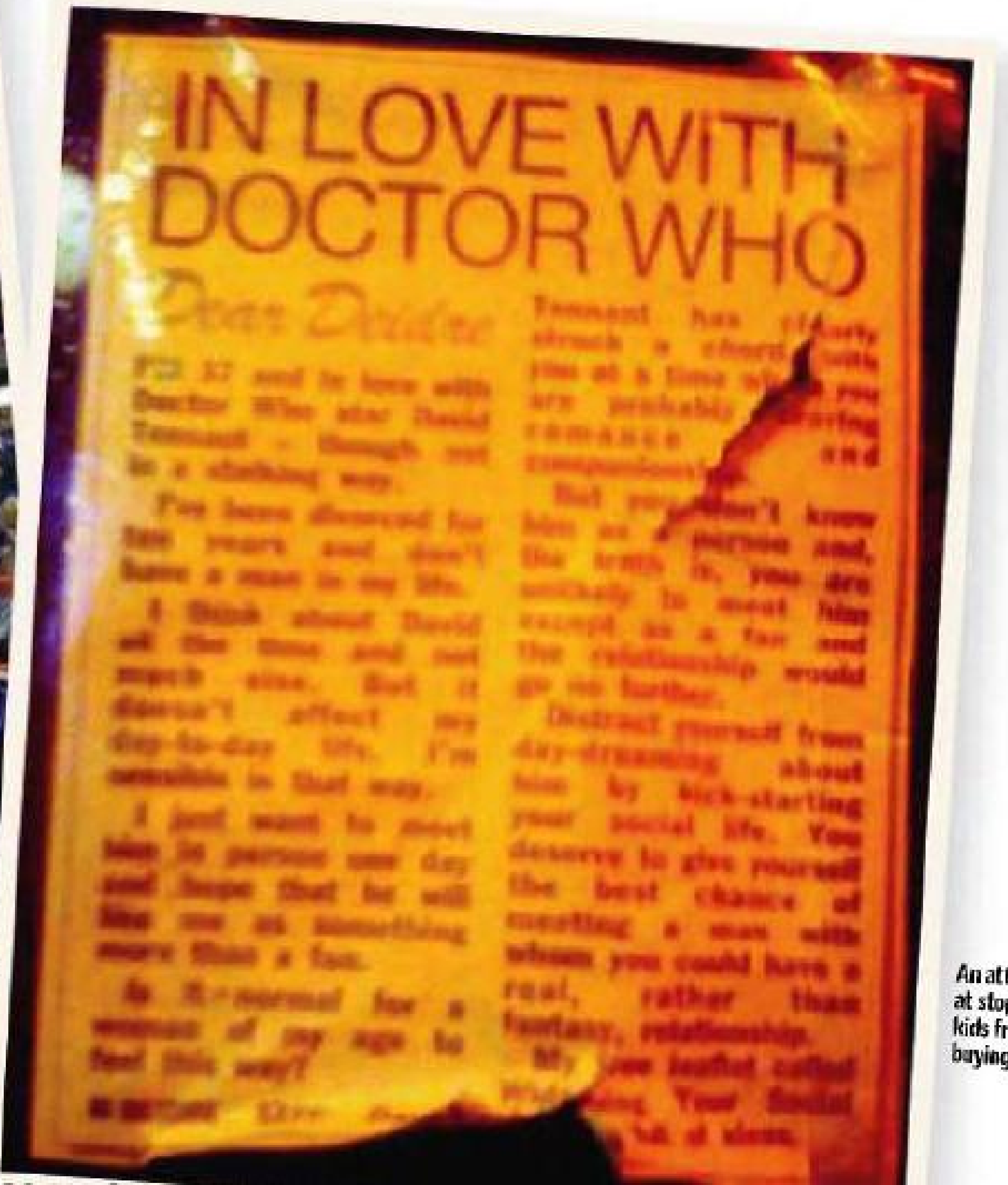
I'D DO DOCTOR WHO

I saw this taped onto a fag machine in a pub (below) and thought you guys would appreciate it. It's a snippet from the 'Dear Deidre' section of *The Sun* from a 'reader' who's in love with Doctor Who. I love the answer from 'Deidre', which reads, "David Tennant has clearly struck a chord with you at a time where you're probably craving romance and companionship. Distract yourself from day-dreaming about him by kick-starting your social life."

In other words, get out the house more, you fucking loon.

Shabba, by email

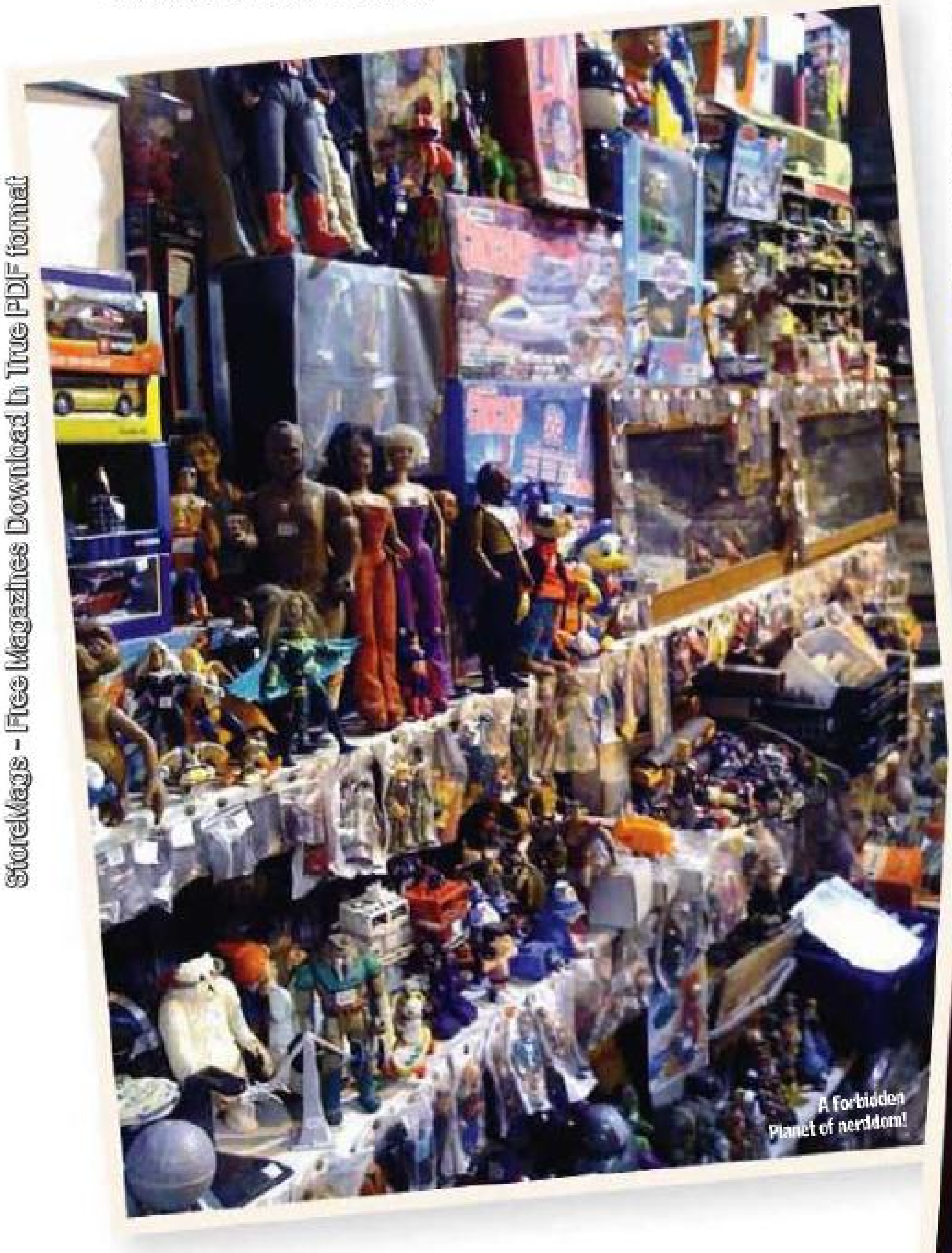




IN LOVE WITH DOCTOR WHO

Dear Deidre

An attempt at stopping kids from buying fags


A Forbidden Planet of nerddom!

proud to be different BIZARRE

Bizarre's Proud To Be Different campaign was launched in response to the death of Sophie Lancaster (right), the 21-year-old from Bacup, Lancashire, who was attacked for dressing as a goth. Contribute at Tinyurl.com/proudforum or write to us at the usual postal address (see p5). The forum is a safe place for readers to share experiences and offer support.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The S.O.P.H.I.E. fund stands for Stamp Out Prejudice, Hatred and Intolerance Everywhere. It raises awareness of the injustice perpetrated against Sophie and works towards a more tolerant, less violent society. To make a donation, go to MySpace.com/inmemoryofsophie

PROUD TO BE DIFFERENT IS NOW ONLINE!

That's right! You can now read all the interviews featured in this section on the web. Look on **Tinyurl.com/proudtobe** for updates on the Proud To Be Different campaign, alternative community news, the Sophie Lancaster Foundation and our sponsors, Samaritans!

Join debates on our Proud To Be Different forum at **Tinyurl.com/proudforum**

SAMARITANS

Samaritans has become the official charity partner of Proud To Be Different!

HOW CAN YOU HELP? There are 201 branches of Samaritans in the UK and Republic of Ireland, and volunteers are contacted over five million times a year by people in emotional distress. In order to maintain a 24-hour service for its callers, the charity needs to raise over £10m every year. To make a donation to Samaritans please call **08709 00 00 32** or visit ***Samaritans.org***

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

proud
to be
different
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NEXT MONTH!

BIZARRE 173
ON SALE
15 FEBRUARY

PICTURE: NICK SAGLIMBENI/ALTEXCLUSIVE.COM

VANESSA LAKE!

THOSE **TATTOOS**! THAT **HAIR**! THOSE… **INCREDIBLE BOOBS**! ARE YOU MAN ENOUGH TO HANDLE VANESSA?

STRANGE THING

PICTURE: MARK BERRY

BEARDED LADY!

RICHARD LORENC WENT LOOKING FOR HIS **LONG-LOST MOTHER**, AND GOT MORE THAN HE BARGAINED FOR!

HP LOVECRAFT!

JOIN *BIZARRE* AS THE HP LOVECRAFT HORROR RENAISSANCE KICKS OFF. **2011 BELONGS TO CTHULHU!**

PLUS!

THE WORLD'S MOST **AMAZING PHOTOS**!
BIZARRE'S **HOTTEST READERS**!

Parties

Barcelona Steampunk Convention

WORDS **DENISE STANBOROUGH**
PHOTOS **DARIO RUMBO**

DETAILS

VENUE: Espai Jove La Fontana, Barcelona
DATE: 13-14 November
WEB: Consteampunk.blogspot.com

FROM THE OUTSIDE, THE SPANISH council building looked totally normal. But, unbeknown to the busy afternoon shoppers streaming past, it'd been taken over by a gaggle of hardcore steampunk enthusiasts.

Ray guns at the ready, these cog-heads were in for a steamy weekend of treats, including a display of impressive talent at an art and handicraft exhibition, role-playing shenanigans, heated debates on retrofuturisms and steampunk in the current world, and "build your own ray gun" workshops.

In fact, with all of the hand-made craftiness going on, *Bizarre* hadn't seen so much wood under one roof since we attended the UK gangbang record attempt last year.

Throughout the evening punters let their goggles down as well, though. Many indulged in some retro, neo-retro, steampunk cabaret (try saying that with a gas mask on after seven vodkas), while eastern dancers got the crowd in the mood for shape-throwing by gas light, until the early morning.

Josep's costume is "inspired by Dr Livingston" and **Alassie** is "a poltergeist hunter"

Claudia and **Manuel** "This is our first steampunk event, and Manuel won the ray gun fight!"

Liz "Steampunk goes beyond pure aesthetics. I'm truly in love with it"

Madame Chocolate "I got my outfit idea from a Toulouse-Lautrec painting. This dress is well over 100 years old"

WANT US TO PHOTOGRAPH YOUR PARTY?
Email
Your_Bizarre@dennis.co.uk
or text 82189*, starting
your message
BIZ LETTER

Justo
"I'm a bohemian, 19th century gentleman with a dark side"

Vanesa
"All of the amazing accessories and clothes here are giving me the urge to experiment!"

Maria "loves the Victorian era" and **Rafael** "likes role-playing on the steampunk scene"

Joan Ramon
"As a vampire slayer, I came prepared with many weapons"

Lady Oz
"I enjoyed making my own ray gun!"

Natalia
"The good thing about steampunk is that there are no rules"

---

* EACH TEXT MESSAGE COSTS 25P PLUS STANDARD NETWORK RATE. FOR HELP EMAIL MOBILE@DENNIS.CO.UK OR WRITE TO MOBILE DEPARTMENT, DENNIS, 30 CLEVELAND STREET, LONDON W1T 4JD

YOUR Body Art

READER TATTS AND BODY MODS

BIZARRE
CLASH OF THE TATTS
2011

FLASH YOUR INK AND BE A *BIZARRE* WINNER!

***BIZARRE* HAS TEAMED UP,** once again, with the incredible Brighton Tattoo Convention to find the most original, weird and inspiring tattoos in the UK. **BE WARNED!** You might have a lovely bit of tribal work or a pretty pin-up gal, but this competition is only concerned with unique, mind-blowing body art that you won't find anywhere else!

LAST YEAR'S WINNER

WHAT YOU WIN!

Finalists will win the opportunity to show off their ink in front of a judging panel at the Brighton Tattoo Convention, 29-30 January 2011*, and the ultimate winner will bag themselves **a tattoo to the value of £200 by *London Ink*'s Phil Kyle!** The winner and runners-up will have their work showcased in *Bizarre*, so don't miss the chance to show off your ink to the world!

HOW TO ENTER

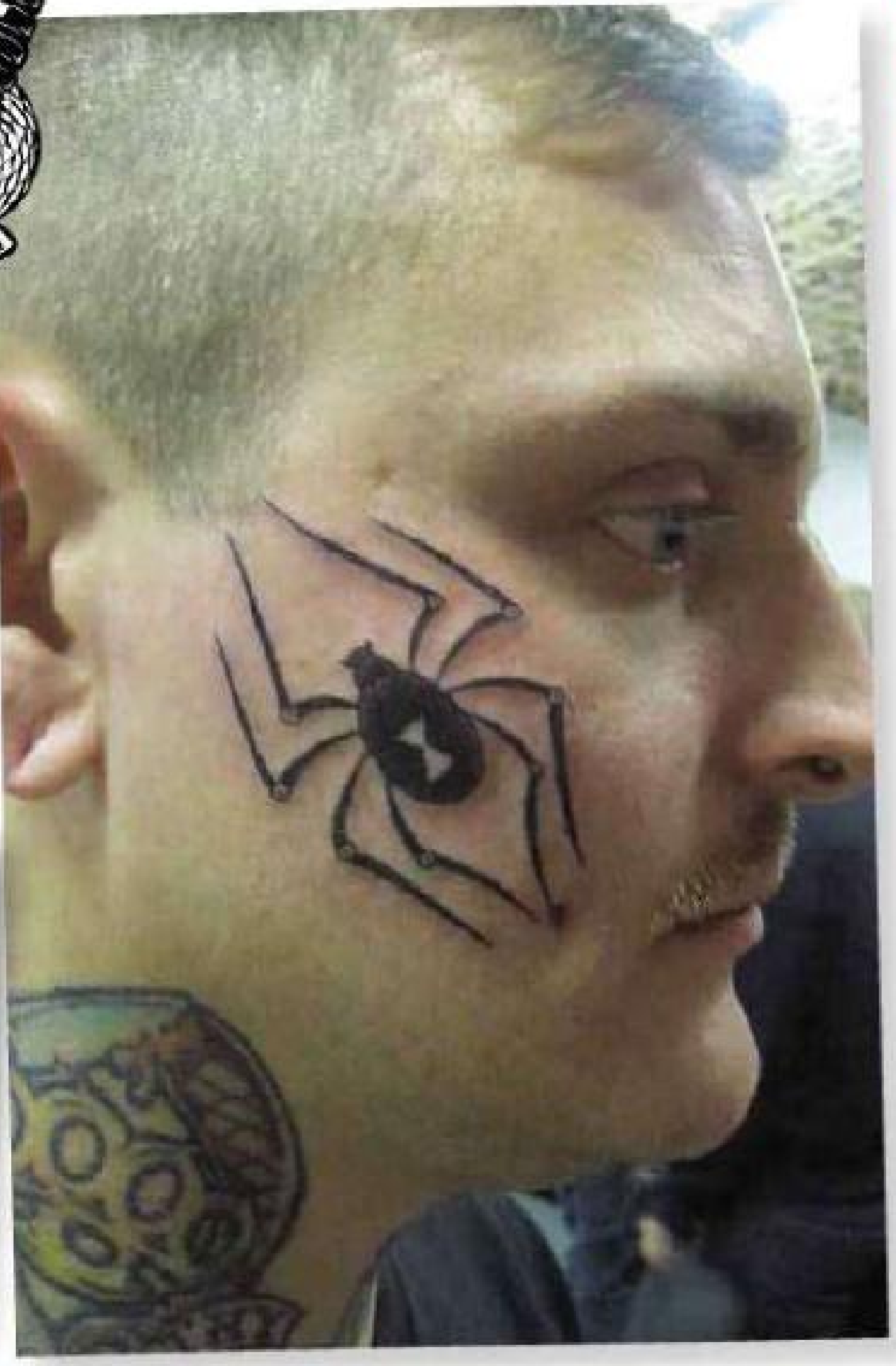
Email a clear pic of your ink – along with a photograph of your face – to **YOURBODYARTCOMP@DENNIS.CO.UK**. Also include your name and address, along with these details about your tattoo:

Who did it?
What is it?
Why did you choose it?

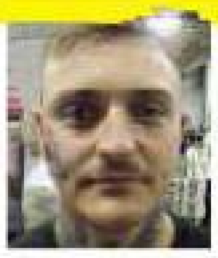
All details must be included. No headshot, no entry into the competition. The competition is only open to entrants over 18 years old. Dems da rules!

For more information on the Brighton Tattoo Convention, go to Brightontattoo.com

*All finalists will have to make their own way to Brighton for the tattoo convention – *Bizarre* cannot pay for transport or accommodation. Sorry!



NICK THORPE
SUFFOLK



WHO DID IT? Ross Nagle from All Star Tattoo Studio, Limerick, Ireland.

WHAT IS IT? A spider crawling on my face.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT? It was just a bit of fun. I like spiders and I have them tattooed elsewhere. I'd booked in for a tattoo on my arm, so this was a bit impulsive.

WHAT RESPONSE DO YOU GET FROM PEOPLE? People like to take photos. But because I already had ink on my neck and hands before the spider I don't think it'll change my life much – I'll just get a few more people looking at me.

WHAT DO YOUR FAMILY THINK ABOUT IT? My wife isn't happy. She really didn't want me to have it done.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT HAVING TATTOOS? Well, I'm a tattooist so it's my whole life.

GOT ANY MORE PLANNED? I'm thinking about getting more ink on my face.

ANRYS
LATVIA

WHO DID THEM? I do all of my own modifications.

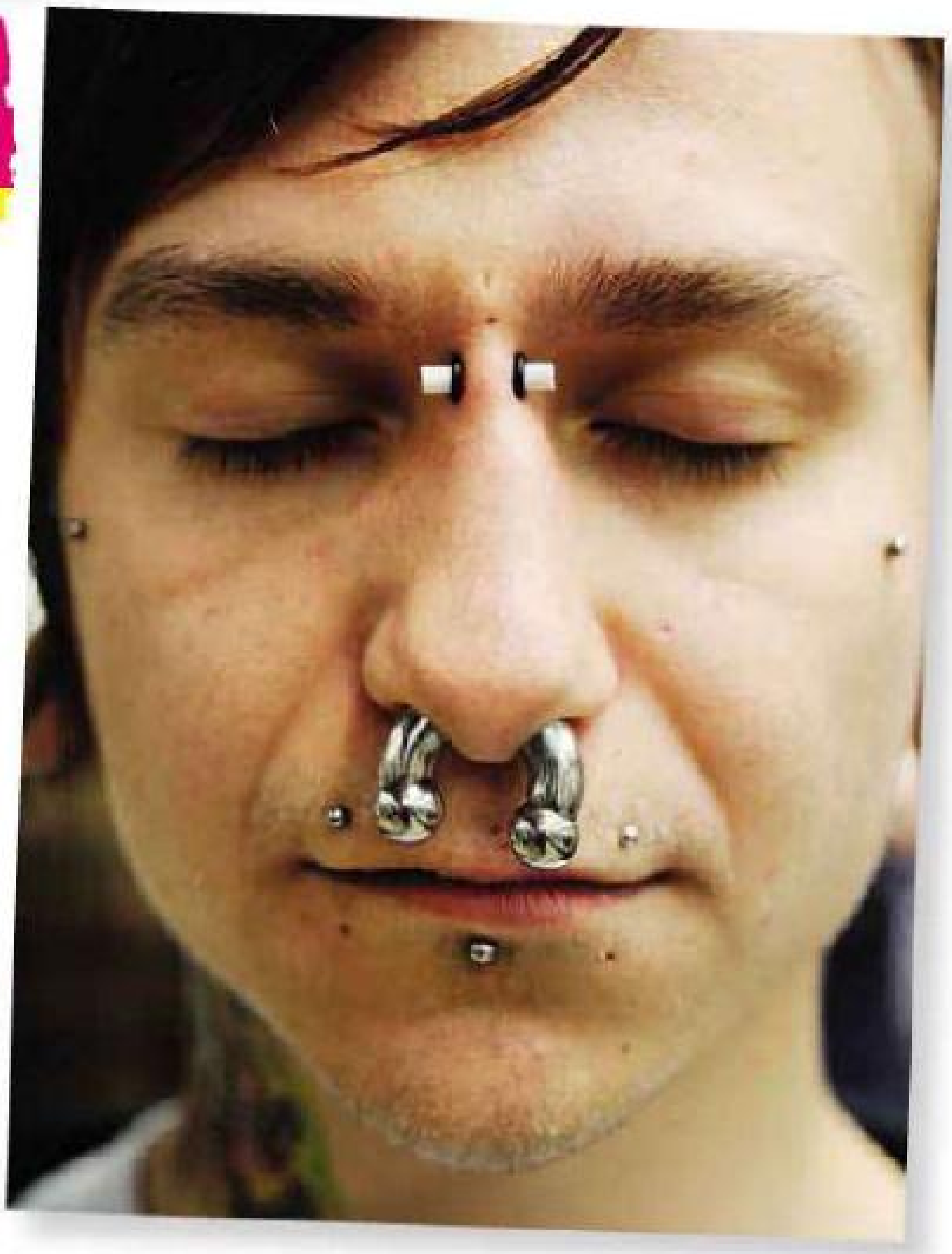
WHAT ARE THEY? A septum piercing, a bridge, and a labret.

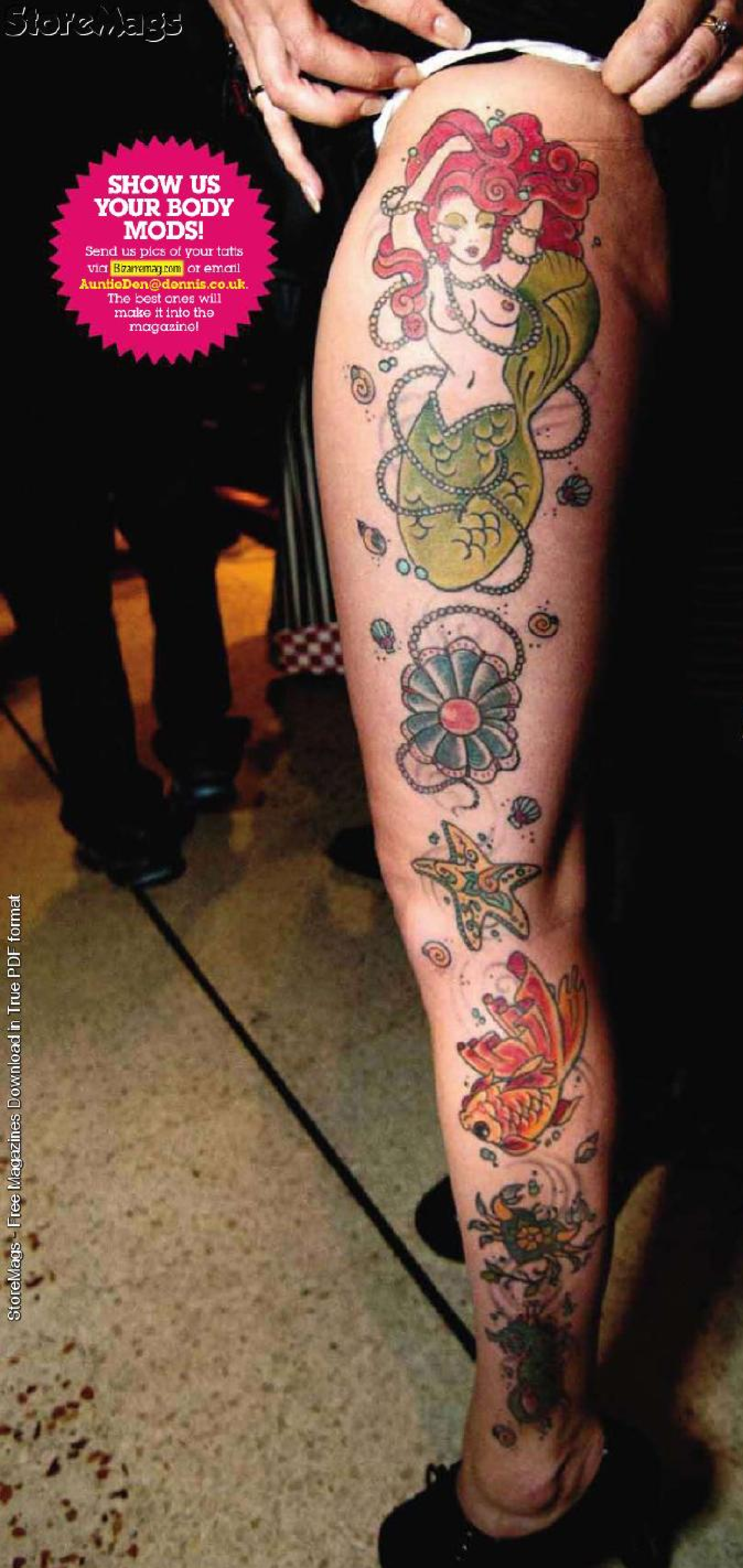
WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THEM? I think piercings are fun, and I pierce myself and my friends all the time. I stretch my septum out every month, and now it's reached 8mm. It took a lot of patience to do my bridge; it took about six weeks to stretch properly.

WHAT RESPONSE DO YOU GET FROM PEOPLE? People in Latvia are not used to seeing these kinds of body modifications, so they tend to think I'm a bit weird or a call me a freak.

WHAT DO YOUR FAMILY THINK ABOUT IT? My mum really doesn't like the curved bar I have through my septum, so I take it out and hide it from her.

GOT ANY MORE PLANNED? It's more than likely, because I can easily do them.





SHOW US YOUR BODY MODS!

Send us pics of your tatts via Bizarremag.com or email **AuntieDen@dennis.co.uk**. The best ones will make it into the magazine!

LULU LAROCCA
BIRMINGHAM

WHO DID IT? Dawnie at Painted Lady Tattoo Parlour, Birmingham.

WHAT IS IT? It's my leg of the sea! It starts with a mermaid, then moves on to a clam, a starfish, a crab and a seahorse.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT? My daughter's name, Dylan, means 'the sea'. We started with small designs at the bottom of my leg, but the ones further up are much bigger than I'd first anticipated!

WHAT RESPONSE DO YOU GET FROM PEOPLE? I get lovely comments about how beautiful it is, but one guy on the Tube looked at my leg, then shook his head at me.

WHAT DO YOUR FAMILY THINK ABOUT IT? My mum says I'll end up covered, but she can't complain because she's started a collection, too.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT HAVING TATTOOS? I think they're really pretty and they feel good. However, the more ink I have done, the more of a wuss I become! The side of my knee hurt the most. I deal with the pain by eating sweets and putting on a film, if Dawnie lets me.

GOT ANY MORE PLANNED? The outline of a peacock has already been inked on my calf, it just needs some colour.

PICTURES: ESTER SEGARRA AND MARCUS T

Go to **UltraVixens.net** to see photos, videos and blogs of thousands of girls. The finest new foxes make it on to these pages every issue!

BIZARRE'S Ultra Vixens

Rayna Terror

26, London

"A guy I went to school with got a tattoo of me, which is odd, but I love getting inked. Once, while I was out shopping, I was trying on a sexy dress, and my partner joined me for a quiet but passionate sex session in the changing room!"

To download Rayna Terror's picture to your mobile, text BIZV180 to 86737

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Little Sofi

23, Manchester

"My biggest achievement has been writing for a couple of magazines, and getting the word 'cunt' printed in one of my articles. I like a guy who has a beard, tattoos, enjoys videogames, and isn't boring in the bedroom."

To download Little Sofi's picture to your mobile, text BIZV179 to 86737

EACH DOWNLOAD COSTS £1.50 PLUS STANDARD NETWORK RATE*

Miss Mischief

35, Massachusetts, USA

"Travelling the world in an RV and getting tattooed by people everywhere would be a dream come true for me. I love Mohawks, guns, latex, high heels, lipstick and dancing, but I hate babies, stop signs and bad drivers."

To download Miss Mischief's picture to your mobile, text BIZV177 to 86737

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Shoflake

21, Dublin, Ireland

"I'm a criminology student with a passion for blood, and I'll find any excuse to dress up in costume. I really admire actor Michael Pitt because his movies perfectly describe me, plus he looks like he's rolled around in a bin bag. I like that grunge look."

To download Shoflake's picture to your mobile, text BIZV178 to 86737

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Strawberry Venom

25, Manchester

"I make my own latex outfits, which I'm really proud of, but my other passions are my Xbox 360, good rock music, and my pet snakes. I'd love to own a reptile specialist pet centre one day. And talking of pets, my new house is haunted by my old dead dog!"

To download Strawberry Venom's picture to your mobile, text BIZV176 to 86737

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Coco Kain

18, Scotland

"I'm a good-time girl, who always ends up getting into a lot of trouble. I'm obnoxious and like getting drunk. Once, my mum decided she wanted to be a sex-line operator, but got another job, so I ended up doing it instead!"

To download Coco Kain's picture to your mobile, text BIZV175 to 86737

EACH DOWNLOAD COSTS **£1.50** PLUS STANDARD NETWORK RATE*

Nori Zay

21, Washington, USA

"I'm a wild fun-box with an insatiable thirst for the stranger things in life. I once died during heart surgery, but thankfully they brought me back. I want to backpack across Europe before I snuff it!"

To download Nori Zay's picture to your mobile, text BIZV174 to 86737

EACH DOWNLOAD COSTS **£1.50** PLUS STANDARD NETWORK RATE*

Tessara

22, California, USA

"My weirdest moment was meeting Doug Bradley at an afterparty. I loved him as Pinhead! My hottest sexual fantasy would be romping with a gorgeous goth guy in drag and a girl, while wearing thigh-high stockings in a pool of fake blood."

To download Tessara's picture to your mobile, text BIZV173 to 86737

EACH DOWNLOAD COSTS **£1.50** PLUS STANDARD NETWORK RATE*

COME AGAIN!

Don't be surprised if you see an Ultra Vixen you recognise in the magazine – we're not averse to featuring Vixens more than once if their pics are good enough!

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Ultra Vixens

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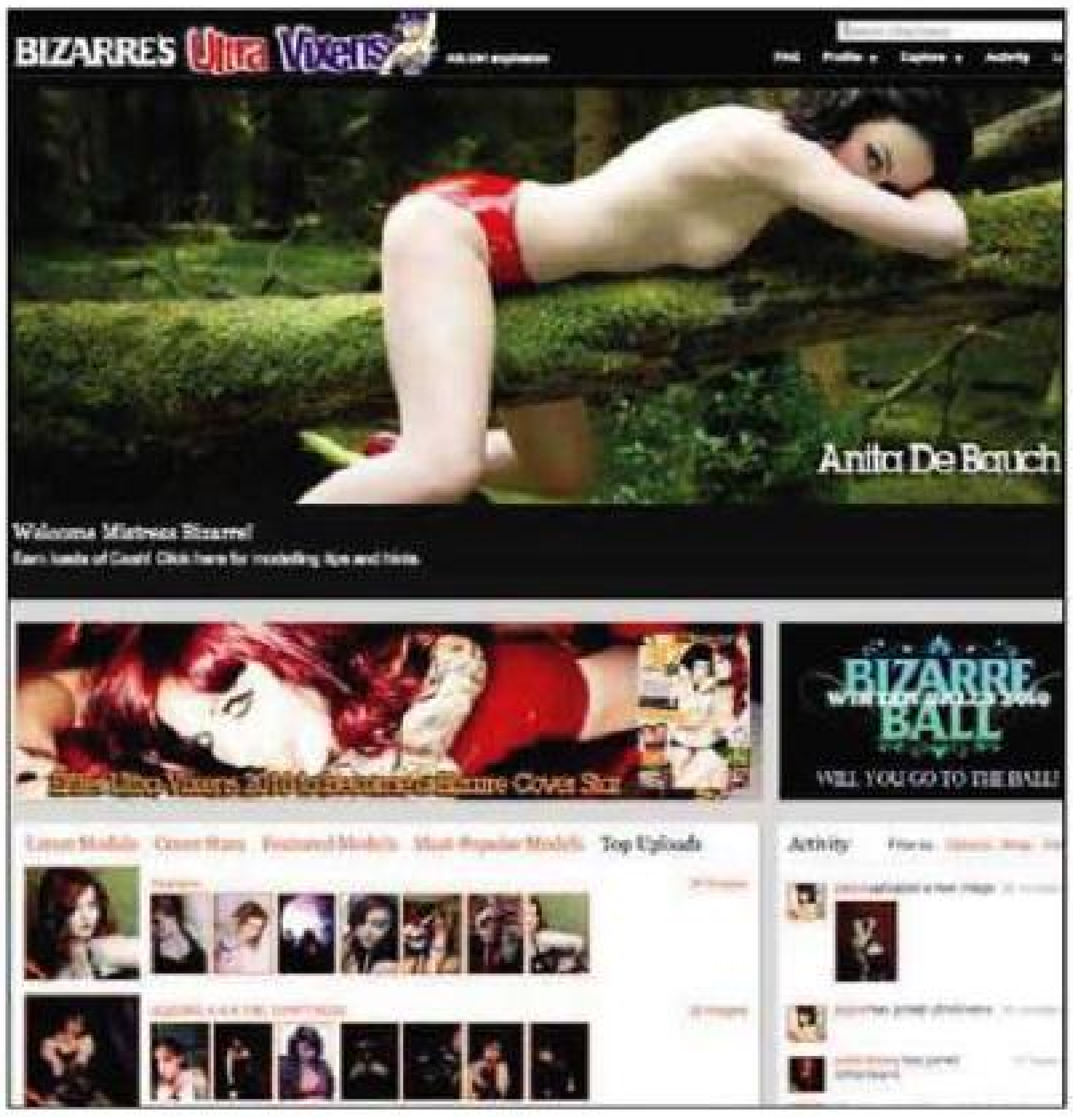

BIZARRE'S Ultra Vixens

Anita De Bauch

Welcome Mistress Bizarre!

BIZARRE BALL

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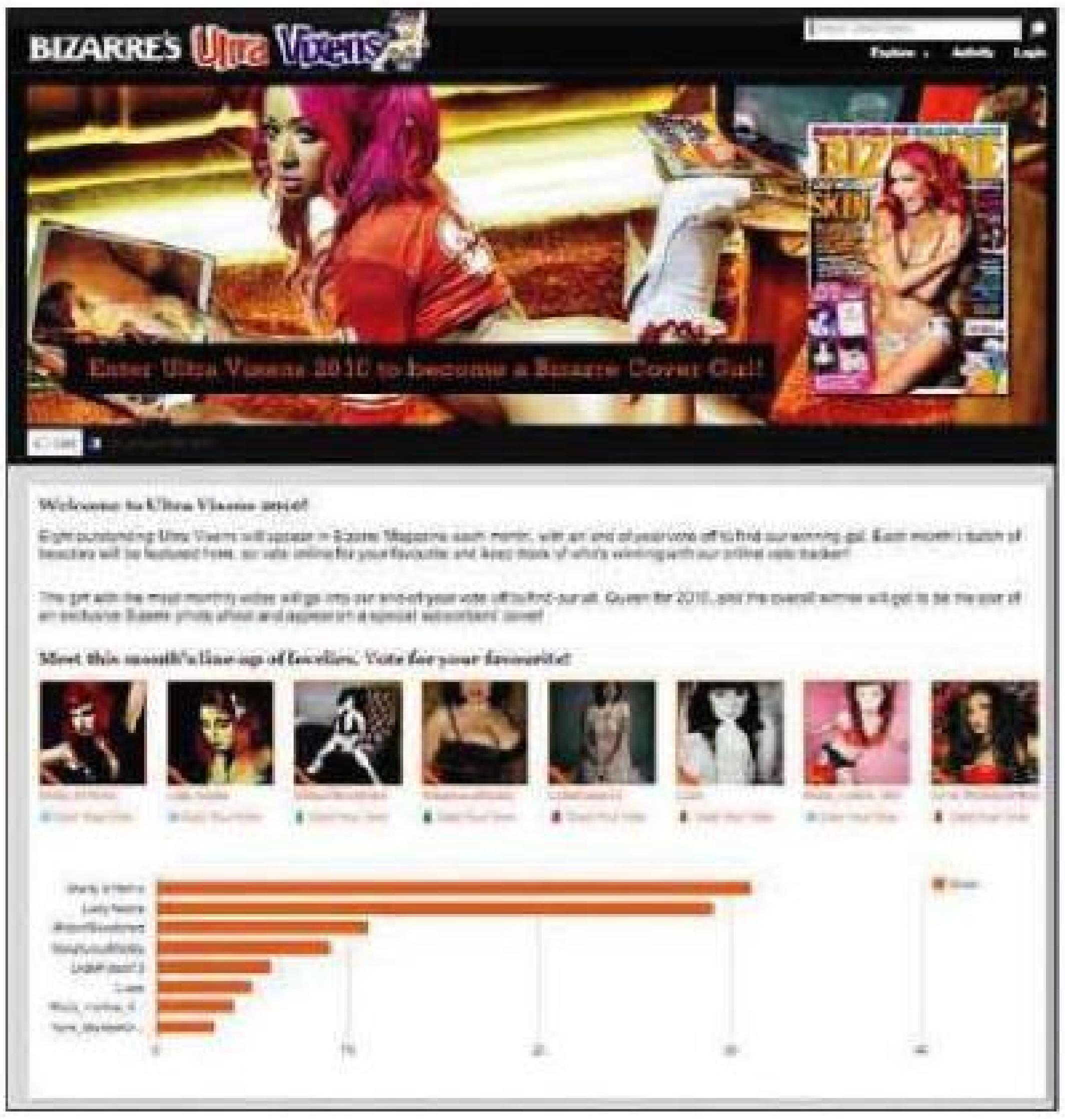

BIZARRE'S Ultra Vixens

Enter Ultra Vixens 2010 to become a Bizarre Cover Girl!

Meet this month's line-up of lovelies. Vote for your favourite!

Sign up now at ***UltraVixens.net***

Ultra Vixens

2010 winner!

WHO'S THE VICTORIOUS VIXEN?

Tune in next month to see which of our 12 finalists won the 2010 Ultra Vixens contest – and a place on the subscribers' cover!

Winning Wench!

AS VOTED BY YOU!

Congratulations to **Zombie Candy** (*Bizarre 170*) who received the most votes this month! She wins Jane Doe goodies! (right)

WHAT YOU WIN

Each month in Ultra Vixens we choose our favourite girl, and she wins a latex skull-and-crossbones eyepatch and nipple tassels, designed by *Bizarre* fave **Janedoelatex.com**

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WORDS **CIARAN MCCAULEY**
PHOTOS **KATIE VICE**

GAME GIRL

Grab your joystick, push it forwards, and press fire for the geeky Von

"I'm not as cool as people think I am," insists Von, our sexy, space-invading cover girl. "I'm not much fun."

Really? Covered in lube, Von has spent the day frolicking with *Bizarre*'s nerd-tastic collection of toys and relics, making naked mischief. "Today has been awesome," she grins. "I love the theme and the costumes – especially the Pac-Man nipple pasties. They look like they're eating my tits, which is arousing. And I love pulling on the hot black rubber pants. They're like dental floss. Seriously, I lost them inside me and had to pull them out, twice."

It sounds like fun to us. Back in November, Von squeezed on a little latex outfit and turned up at the Bizarre Ball with best mate and fellow *Bizarre* cover star Alex Sim-Wise, where the pair were exceedingly gropey. "At the end of the night I was in an orgy with loads of hot girls in rubber, doing a lot of touching," she smiles. "I took advantage, although it was *good* touching, not *bad* touching."

What's the difference? "Bad touching is when the other person doesn't want you to do it, but good touching is when they do," she says. "Recently, I did a show at a bar, where I poured whiskey shots from my mouth straight into other girls' gobs. That was the only way they could get the shots. That's good touching. And I do like spitting on people."

If that's what uncool bores do, we'd better grab our anoraks and skulk back to our model train sets. But while the initials of this retro-gaming, rubber-obsessed beauty are at the top of *Bizarre*'s high-score leader board for being hotter than an arcade fire and twice as fun to be around, Von leads a double life. On one hand, the 25-year-old is a latex-obsessed part-time model, who enjoys dishing out the 'good touch'. On the other, she's a self-professed bore, who loves cookery programmes and putting together PowerPoint presentations for her full-time job in sales.

"No one at work knows I'm here," she winks. "It's funny because work colleagues think I'm really boring. I'm known as the dull one, but they don't know that I like going out in rubber and dressing up as a zombie in my spare time. Leading separate lives is exciting. I'm like a secret agent – a zombie fetish spy."

This one time…

The one constant in Von's multiple personas is her geekiness. "At school I was a prefect and head girl. I loved studying and I was a band nerd. I played the flute in the wind band, big band and sang in the chamber choir. Oh my God! That's really geeky, isn't it?" she exclaims. "I also collect and categorise things."

And the Essex girl likes nothing more than categorising her extensive collection of extremely

ASSISTANT: CARISSA HARROD. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: JOHANNA DALEMO. UTTERLY STUNNING CUSTOM-MADE COSTUMES AND STYLING: FLORENCE DRUART AND THE HOUSE OF HARLOT

HOUSE OF Harlot

THANKS TO THE WONDROUS FOLKS AT FIRE PR AND RUBBERSOLE.CO.UK FOR VON'S CONVERSE SNEAKERS.

AND TO TEAM BIZARRE FOR HOARDING RETRO CRAP IN THEIR ATTICS FOR ALL THESE YEARS.

BATMAN ADVENTURES
USA
GREEN LANTERN
MORE OUTER-SPACE ACTION WITH THE
DC

"I think comics have far more potential than a lot of people realise..."

Harvey Pekar, *American Splendor*

perverted hentai books. "I love hentai," she reveals. "The dirtier the better! I'm just interested in the visuals – particularly girls with giant tits and as many cocks in them as possible. Or pictures with girls covered in ridiculous amounts of jizz."

On her last trip to Tokyo, Von stocked up on so much filth that she was worried about getting back into the country. "Coming back to the UK, I was concerned, because you can get in trouble at customs if you have a lot of hentai," she says.

This Japanese eye-candy is the primary inspiration for her favourite hobby – drawing. "Ever since I was a little kid I've obsessively drawn naked women. I always thought I was gay and didn't understand it, but I just really enjoy it," she says. "I much prefer looking at a naked woman than a naked man, and right now, I'm working on a huge hentai-style painting of a naked girl with huge tits and giant blue tentacles going into her. But she's also a zombie."

Despite these personality quirks, Von maintains she's just a regular square. "I like to go to bed at a reasonable hour most evenings and I like baking, filleting fish and cleaning," she insists. "I tend to bum around the house in geeky, unsexy clothes, not being much fun." Yeah, she's just your ordinary, bog-standard, zombie fetish spy.

"Fire in the hole!"

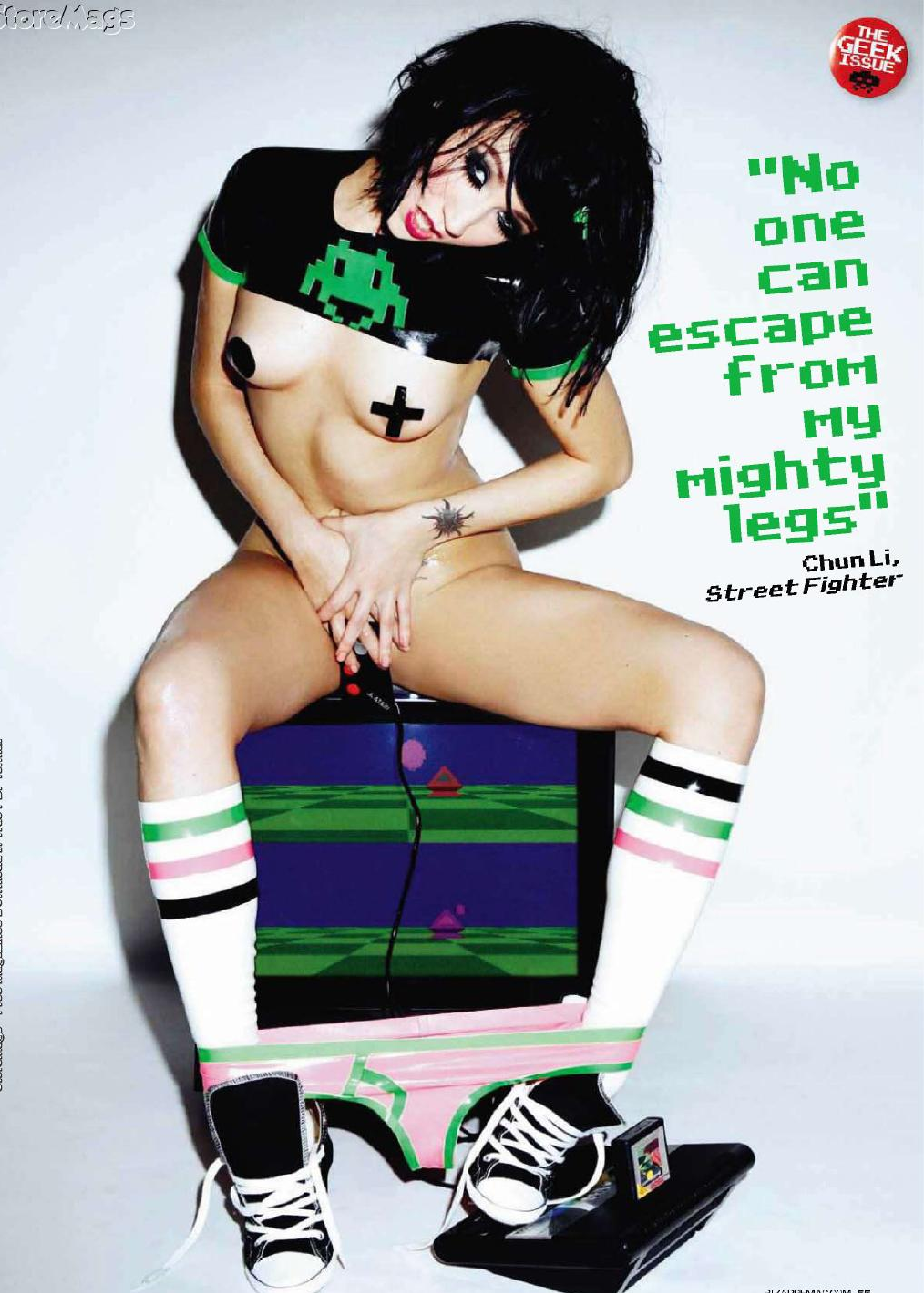
Counter-Strike

"Let me get a piece of THAT action!"

Fox McCloud, *Lylat Wars*

"Back door, huh? Good idea!"

Han Solo, Return Of The Jedi


THE
GEEK
ISSUE

"No one can escape from my mighty legs"

Chun Li,
Street Fighter

Advanced Dungeons&Dragons

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THE GEEK ISSUE
NYSE

BIZARRE'S 50 GREATEST GEEKS

WORDS **TEAM BIZARRE**

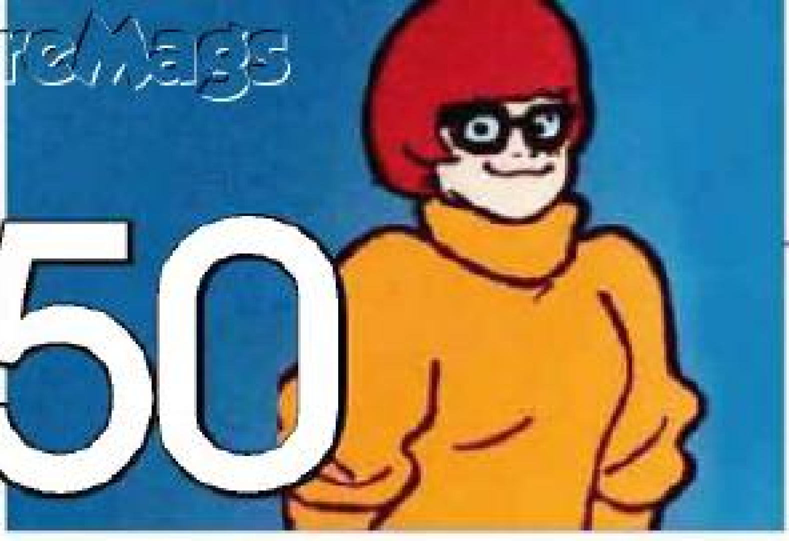
From film directors and comicbook legends to body modders and horror writers, hold tight for *Bizarre*'s rundown on the geek icons who changed our lives

So, what the hell *is* a geek? It's a question that's been troubling *Bizarre* since we decided to publish a special mag devoted to geek culture, and an issue that's caused more arguments in the office since the time Masuimi Max left her knickers in the *Bizarre* broom cupboard and everyone wanted them as a souvenir.

While people geek-out and obsess over the strangest things, for the purposes of our list celebrating the world's greatest nerds, dorks and misfits, we've narrowed it down to pioneers of videogames, comicbook, cartoons, science-fiction, cult movies, pulp fiction and role-playing games. And because this list could've spiralled off into hundreds of entries – our original list featured over 200 names – we've removed most of the technology and computer pioneers such as Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Tim Berners-Lee, who've made a huge contribution to geek culture but aren't inherently bizarre.

Disagree with us? Join *Bizarre*'s Facebook group or sign up for our free networking site, YourBizarre.com (see p72), where you can bitch with other freaks and tell us why we're crap. Don't worry – we're used to it. Bring on the geekfight! →

PICTURES: REX FEATURES, CORBIS, GETTY IMAGES, PA PHOTOS, CHANNEL 4, BBC PUBLICITY, WATCHTHEGUILD.COM, WRITER PICTURES



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VELMA DINKLEY

WHO'S SHE? The nerdy member of Scooby-Doo's cartoon gang, Mystery, Inc.

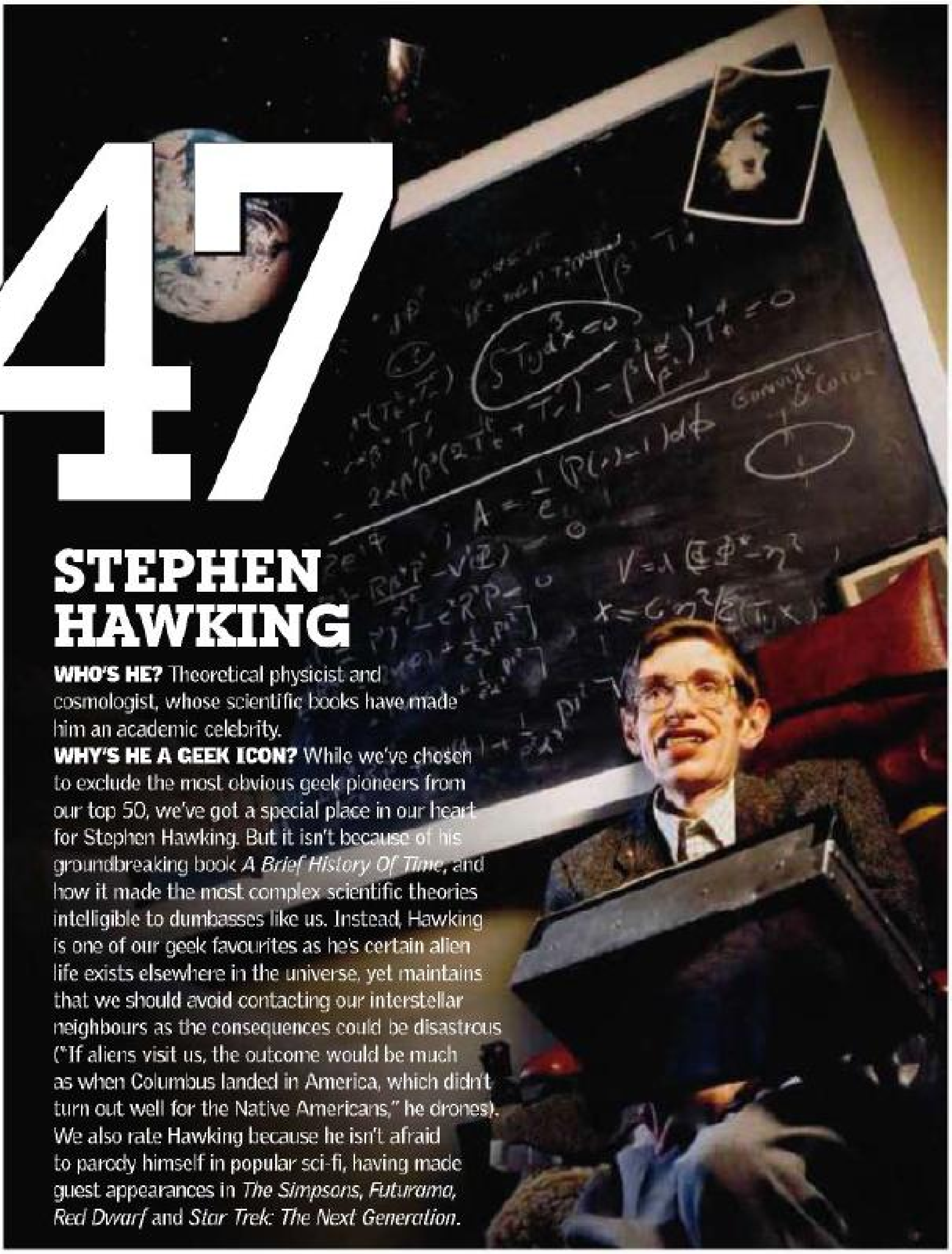
WHY'S SHE A GEEK ICON? Velma is the first geek most of us ever come into contact with. As the dumpy, spectacle-wearing member of the Mystery Machine team, Velma is always the one who cracks the codes, deciphers the clues and saves the day. Airhead Daphne Blake may be the one most boys want to sneak off with looking for clues, but *Bizarre* would rather stick by Velma's side any day.

49

DANA SCULLY

WHO'S SHE? Fictional FBI Special Agent in *The X-Files*, played by Gillian Anderson.

WHY'S SHE A GEEK ICON? While sci-fi heroines have been mostly used as eye candy since the genre's 1950s heyday, Dana Scully was fiercely intelligent and resilient, offering a realistic take on *The X-Files'* mysterious events that made her the show's most memorable character. But, besides her smarts, Dana was a wet dream come true for sci-fi nerds, whose sex appeal spilled into mainstream culture and covers for humdrum mags such as *FHM*.



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STEPHEN HAWKING

WHO'S HE? Theoretical physicist and cosmologist, whose scientific books have made him an academic celebrity.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? While we've chosen to exclude the most obvious geek pioneers from our top 50, we've got a special place in our heart for Stephen Hawking. But it isn't because of his groundbreaking book *A Brief History Of Time*, and how it made the most complex scientific theories intelligible to dumbasses like us. Instead, Hawking is one of our geek favourites as he's certain alien life exists elsewhere in the universe, yet maintains that we should avoid contacting our interstellar neighbours as the consequences could be disastrous ("If aliens visit us, the outcome would be much as when Columbus landed in America, which didn't turn out well for the Native Americans," he drones). We also rate Hawking because he isn't afraid to parody himself in popular sci-fi, having made guest appearances in *The Simpsons*, *Futurama*, *Red Dwarf* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

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DOCTOR WHO

WHO'S HE? A Time Lord.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? As the title character in the longest-running science-fiction TV show in the world, Doctor Who has flown the TARDIS in many guises, from William Hartnell, to Jon Pertwee and current incarnation Matt Smith. While The Doctor's battles with the Daleks scared the pants off kids back in the 1970s, the newer episodes have featured allegories about war and the environment that have not only left us wondering what's going on other planets, but what's happening on our own.

MANDY MORBID

WHO'S SHE? Model, stripper and *D&D* enthusiast

WHY'S SHE A GEEK ICON? Mandy (below, right), together with her porn star chums (including *Bizarre* cover stars Kimberly Kane and Sasha Grey) hang out in her LA home and play *Dungeons & Dragons* (a hybrid of *Advanced D&D* and *D&D 3.5*, if you're interested...) for web TV series *I Hit It With My Axe*. Mandy plays a half-demon cleric called Tizane Ildiko. There's no porn going on, but Mandy and her chums certainly know their swords and dorkery! Take a trip to Hitit withmyaxe.com to see some sessions.

46

45

DEEP BLUE

WHAT IS IT? Chess-playing computer.

WHY IS IT A GEEK ICON? On 11 May 1997, Deep Blue became the first computer to win a game of chess against a reigning world champion, Gary Kasparov. Understandably, Gary got rather upset and accused developer IBM of cheating, stating that he saw "deep intelligence and creativity" in the machine's moves. Considering Deep Blue had the capability of evaluating 200m positions per second, we think it sounds more like a case of sour grapes. Kasparov demanded a rematch, but IBM refused.

44

WILLIAM SHATNER

WHO'S HE? Canadian actor who played Captain James T Kirk in *Star Trek*.

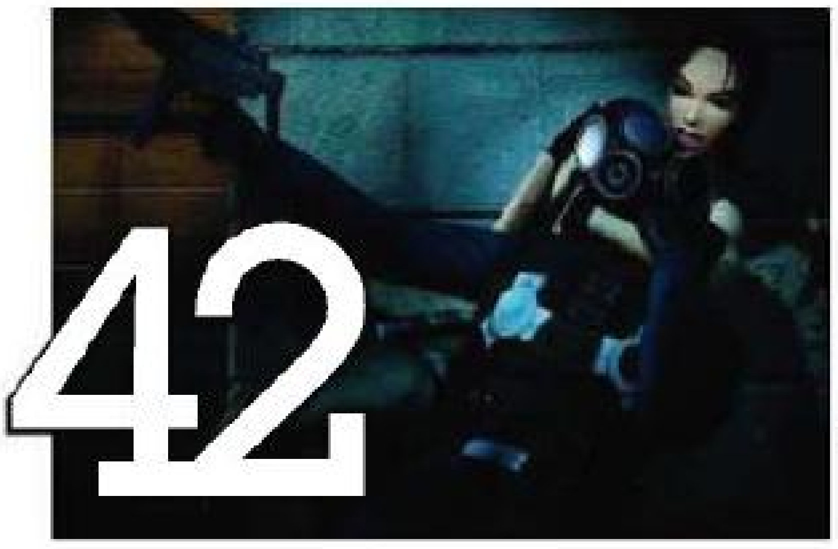
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? After playing one of the most iconic characters in sci-fi, the Shat transcended Kirk to parody himself, write *Star Trek* novels, author a sci-fi series called *TekWar*, release two spoken-word albums, and get involved with countless other weird projects. Unfortunately, he now stars in crappy Twitter-inspired sitcom *$#*! My Dad Says*.

43

TRENT REZNOR

WHO'S HE? The talented multi-instrumentalist behind Nine Inch Nails.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? As well as manipulating electronic sounds, Trent's used technology to reach out to fans. For 2007's *Year Zero*, a concept album criticising US government policy, he created an online alternate reality game that gave clues to the story. A year later, he released NIN album *The Slip* as a free digital download, and he recently co-wrote the tense, ambient soundtrack for Facebook film *The Social Network* (see p69).

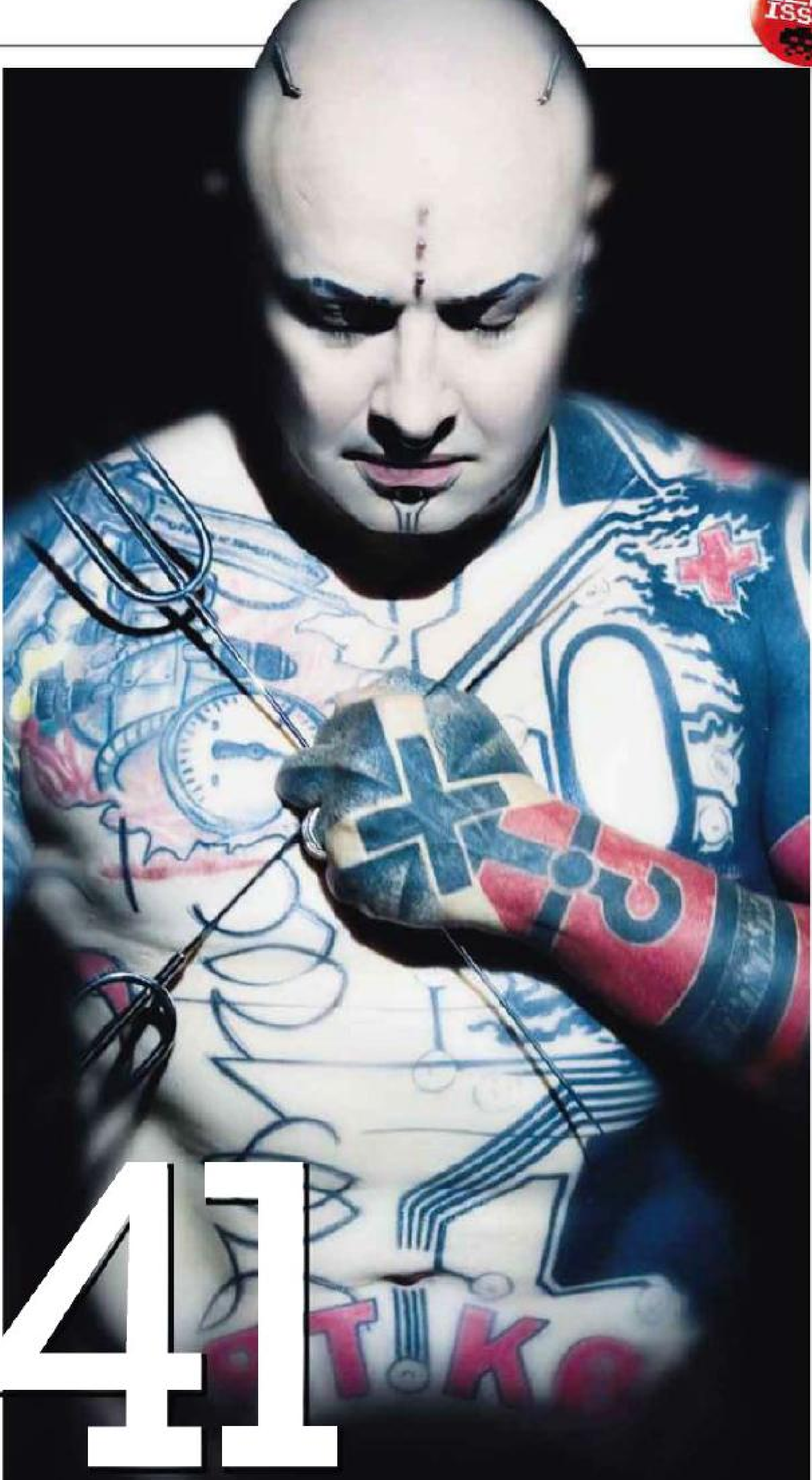


42

LARA CROFT

WHO'S SHE? Star of the *Tomb Raider* videogames.

WHY'S SHE A GEEK ICON? Before Lara Croft hit the scene, gaming heroes tended to be cartoon buffoons, anthropomorphised misfits and meathead barbarians, perpetuating the idea that consoles were for kids and that normal folk shouldn't flirt with the entertainment served up by Nintendo and Sega. But with her pendulous norks, wasp waist and tight, *tight* shorts, Lara injected sex into the world of consoles, widening its appeal and encouraging oldies to buy a PlayStation and rediscover the joys of gaming.



41

LUKAS ZPIRA

WHO'S HE? Pioneering body modder, performer and photographer.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? In 1995 Lukas Zpira opened France's first body modification studio, Body Art/Weird Faktory in Avignon. But today Zpira's work goes far beyond piercing and implants, and in 2004 he wrote the Body Hactivism manifesto which aims to define a movement of artists, researchers and thinkers who use body modifications as a medium. And unlike many modders who look back to ancient tribal rituals for inspiration, those who sign up to Zpira's way of thinking invent avant-garde body art influenced by manga culture, comics, science-fiction films and weird literature. In a nutshell, Zpira is the bridge between geek culture and the increasingly popular world of body mods, and stands tall as an undisputed *Bizarre* icon. →

40

HR GIGER

WHO'S HE? Swiss surrealist painter, sculptor and set designer.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? While there's definitely a geeky dimension to Giger's fetishistic paintings, which blend human anatomy and cold robotics into a slimy biomechanical mix, it's the artist's influence on pop culture that elevates him into our nerd countdown. In cinematic terms Giger's work goes beyond his elegant designs for Ridley Scott's sci-fi shocker *Alien*, and can also be glimpsed in fantasy flicks *Species*, *Batman Forever* and *Alien 3*. Countless alt.folk around the world have consecrated their obsession with Giger by having elaborate tattoos based on his work – just check out any of *Bizarre's Body Art* books for proof – and if you trawl the internet you'll discover hundreds of nerds and dweebs who've spent countless hours making furniture, clothing and even wedding cakes based on Giger's twisted visions.

39

STEVEN SPIELBERG

WHO'S HE? Hollywood director of *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* and *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? While there's a tendency for Spielberg's movies to be sickening and schmaltzy, the director never forgot his childhood obsession with life on other planets, which shaped the imaginary world he often escaped into when his parents divorced in 1960. Spielberg's love of all things otherworldy ensured that *Close Encounters* conveyed the impossible thrill of laying eyes on luminescent spacecraft from another planet, and when Elliot breaks down as his wrinkly pal goes home in *E.T.* it's hard not to shed a sympathetic tear as the scene speaks to the geek inside all of us, who yearns to know what things *really* exist beyond our solar system.

QUENTIN TARANTINO

WHO'S HE? Director of *Reservoir Dogs* and *Kill Bill*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Although he's not as hip as he used to be, Tarantino has directed some amazing movies, all of which were born from his geeky love of cult cinema. Having spent years working in a video store – watching exploitation, martial arts and horror movies all day – Tarantino uses his obsession to shape his own cult fiction, each flick littered with references to crazy films everyone else has forgotten about.

FELICIA DAY

WHO'S SHE? Actress and creator of *The Guild*.
WHY'S SHE A GEEK ICON? Flame-haired geek pin-up Felicia gets to the heart of internet and gaming culture. She wrote, produced and starred in web series *The Guild*, which affectionately portrayed the joys and problems of meeting in-game companions in real-life, guest-starred Wil Wheaton, and led to her doing voice acting for *Guild Wars 2*. As if those geek credentials weren't enough, Felicia also acted in Joss Whedon's *Buffy*, *Dollhouse* and his internet musical *Dr Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*.

WIL WHEATON

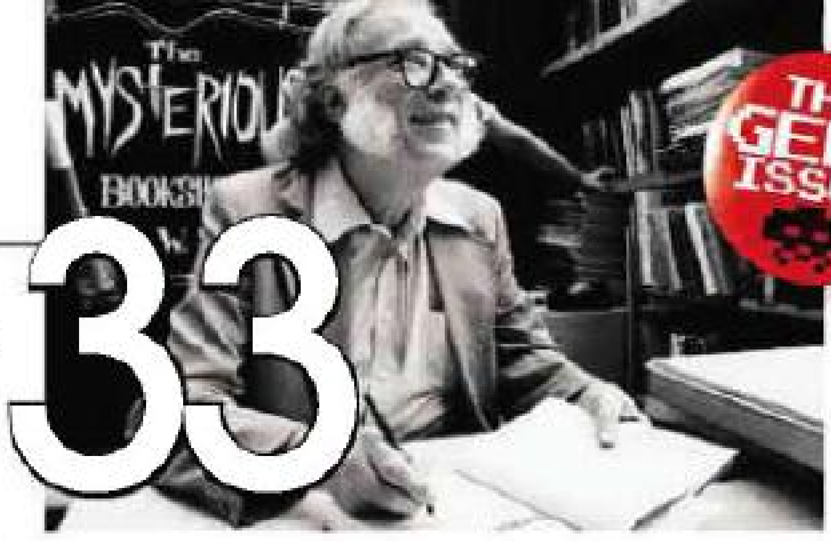
WHO'S HE? Actor and internet celebrity.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Best known for playing gifted teenager Wesley Crusher in the first four seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Wil went on to achieve geeky internet fame with his personal blog, Wil Wheaton Dot Net, and wrote several books off the back of it. Now he spends his life making comedy cameos in shows including *Family Guy*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *The Guild* (see above), as well as working as a voice actor for videogames. Wil also has a sci-fi comedy group called Earnest Borg 9.

CLIVE SINCLAIR

WHO'S HE? Inventor of affordable home computers in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? A spiritual father figure to every British geek in their 30s, Clive Sinclair changed the lives of millions of kids by inventing the ZX Spectrum – a cheap computer that parents bought their kids as an educational tool, but in most cases was used as a games machine. Sinclair's invention dominated school playgrounds across the UK in the early 1980s, with kids swopping cassettes, exchanging playing tips, and becoming part of the first wave of British gaming geeks.

FRITZ LANG

WHO'S HE? Director of silent epic *Metropolis*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Released in 1927, *Metropolis* was the most expensive silent movie ever made, packed with cyclopean cityscapes and special effects that look impressive by today's standards, but must've been mind-boggling to audiences during the early days of cinema. But more than proving sci-fi could appeal to a mass audience, Lang showed that the genre could be used to tackle big themes, with *Metropolis* exploring the social crisis between workers and owners in a capitalist society.

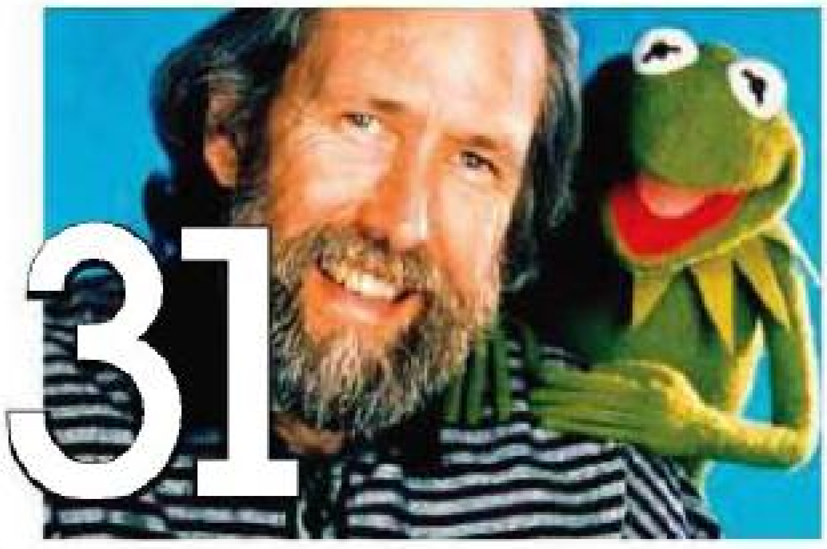


ISAAC ASIMOV

WHO'S HE? American sci-fi author.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? While most sci-fi in the 1940s was only published in pulp magazines, Asimov was one of the first writers to explore the genre as a way to probe the human condition, and speculate about the possible futures of humanity. Asimov's 'Three Laws Of Robotics' – rules about robot behaviour – inspired countless writers to create fiction where robots are closer to human beings than jumped-up Frankenstein's monsters, a concept that's now ingrained in sci-fi literature.

MARK GATISS

WHO'S HE? *League Of Gentlemen* star.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Aside from his role in sci-fi favourite *Doctor Who*, Gatiss is in our list because he celebrated his geeky obsession with fright flicks in *A History Of Horror*, a documentary that aired on highbrow TV channel BBC4, and showed Britain's most discerning viewers that there's more to scary films than blood and boobs. Any gorehound who can turn their nerdy obsession into *The League Of Gentlemen*'s deliciously twisted comedy *and* a high-falutin' TV doc is alright by us.



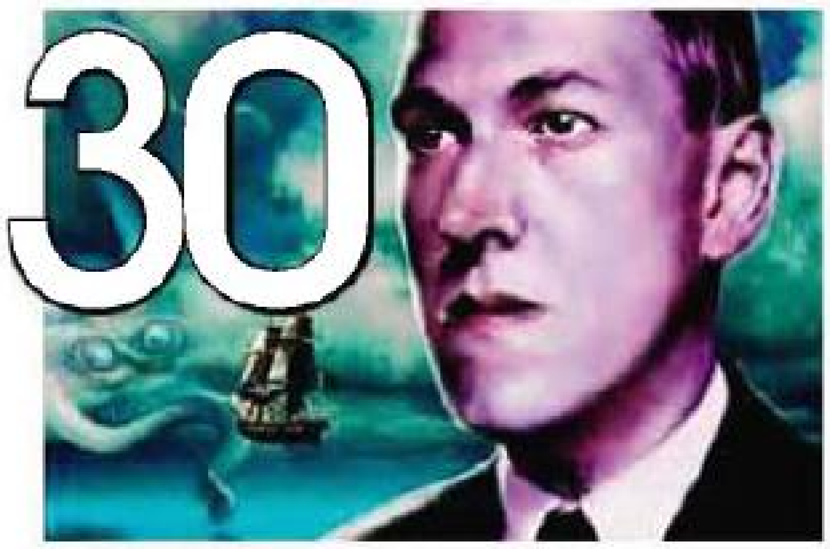
JIM HENSON

WHO'S HE? Creator of The Muppets.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Henson was the master of puppets. Not only was he an ingenious craftsman, but his characters often had obsessive personalities. Dr Bunsen Honeydew and Beaker are devoted to science, the Swedish Chef is passionate about cooking, and Animal is a drumming geek. Henson also co-directed *The Dark Crystal* and directed *Labyrinth*. Sadly, he died from organ failure at age 53, and we hope he's in the most sensational, celebrational, muppetational *Muppet Show* in the sky. →

HP LOVECRAFT

WHO'S HE? 1920s and 30s writer of 'weird fiction'.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Like Tolkien, Lovecraft created his own world and mythology; in his case a bleak, hopeless universe where man is utterly insignificant and at the mercy of malicious gods and other unspeakable terrors. But whereas JRR kept his creations to himself, Lovecraft encouraged other artists to riff on his mythos, in turn spawning eldritch works of fan fiction, movies and artwork that now deliver a bloodcurdling blend of science, realism and horror in every dark corner of the internet.

30



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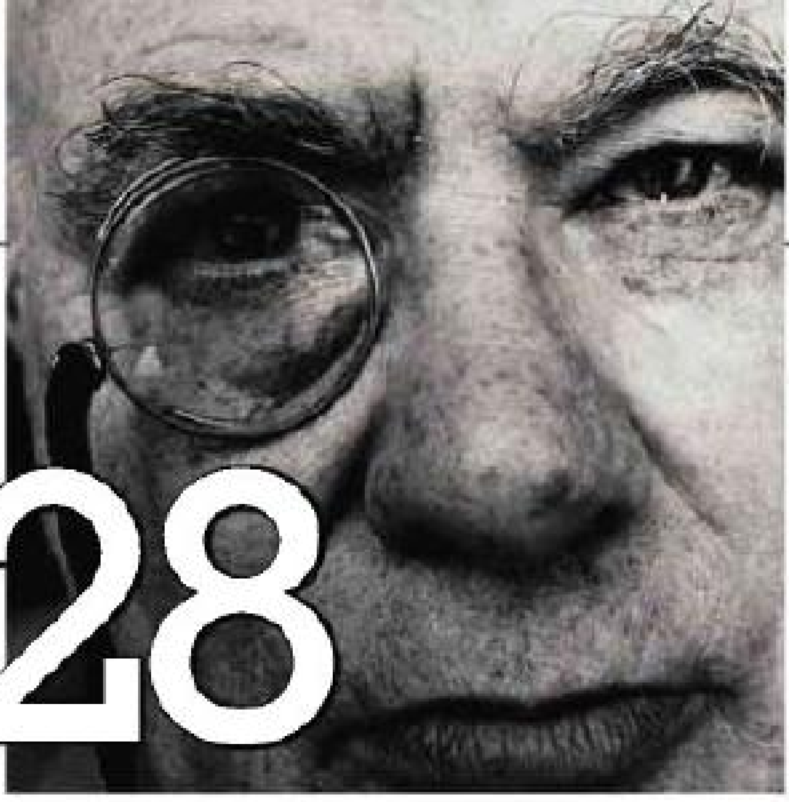

PATRICK MOORE

WHO'S HE? Host of the BBC's *The Sky At Night*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Moore's deep passion for astronomy won him legions of fans, and inspired others to go out and buy their own telescope to watch the skies. Moore's erratic speech and love of monocles also made him a favourite with the British public, and his eccentric reputation was sealed when he played the xylophone at the Royal Variety Performance in 1981. Hell, he even had a star turn in TV videogames show *GamesMaster* in the early 1990s, providing game tips and cheats.

KEVIN SMITH

WHO'S HE? Director and producer, who's usually recognised for his role as geeky character Silent Bob.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Smith is so geeky he created his own world, the 'View Askewniverse', where characters such as stoner duo Jay (Jason Mewes) and Silent Bob (himself) re-appear from one film to the next. Smith also writes comicbooks, has a store in New Jersey, and produces a podcast (the SModcast) that recently featured Neil Gaiman and Amanda Palmer (p69). His self-deprecating, geek-next-door attitude makes him even more lovable.

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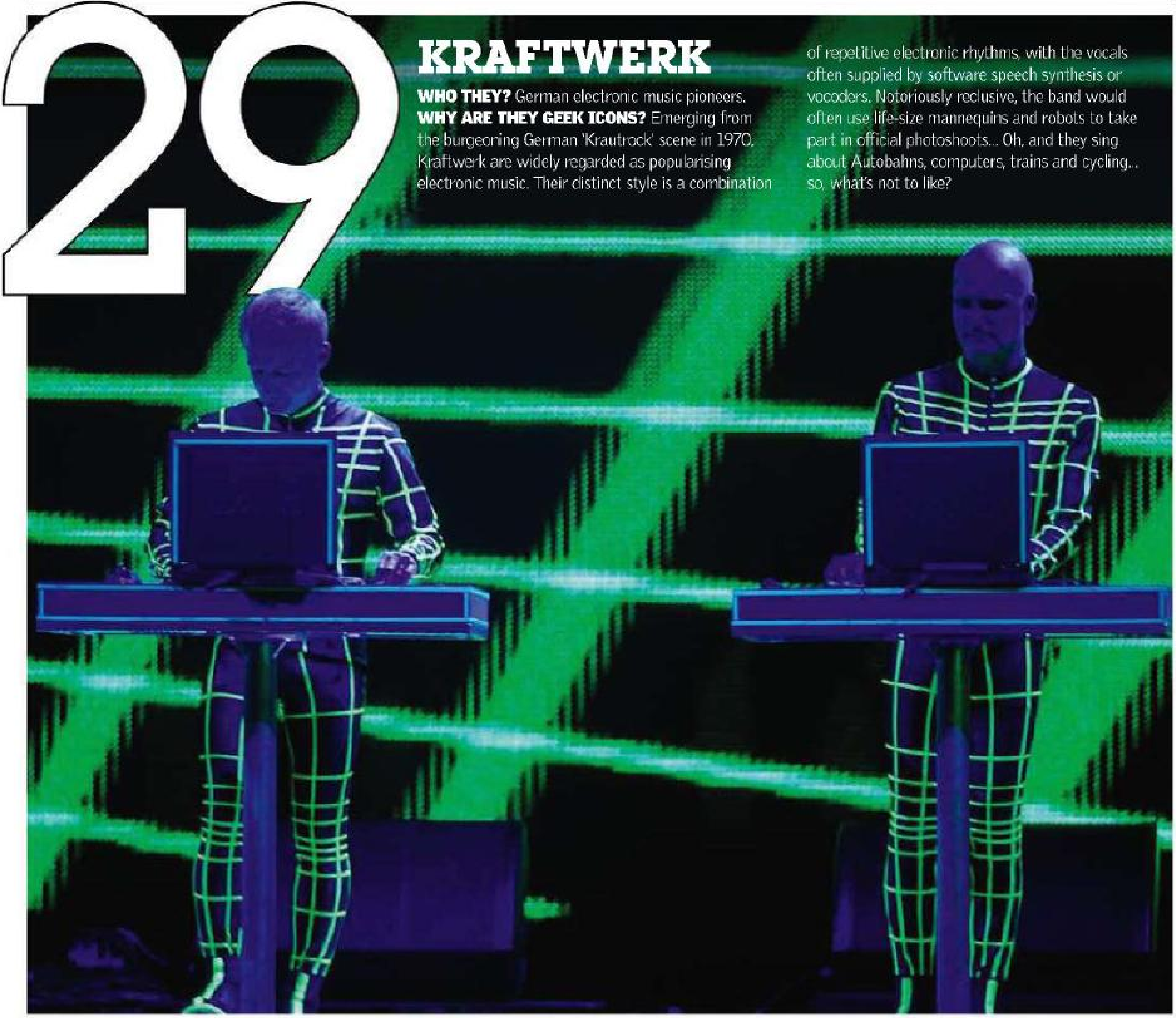
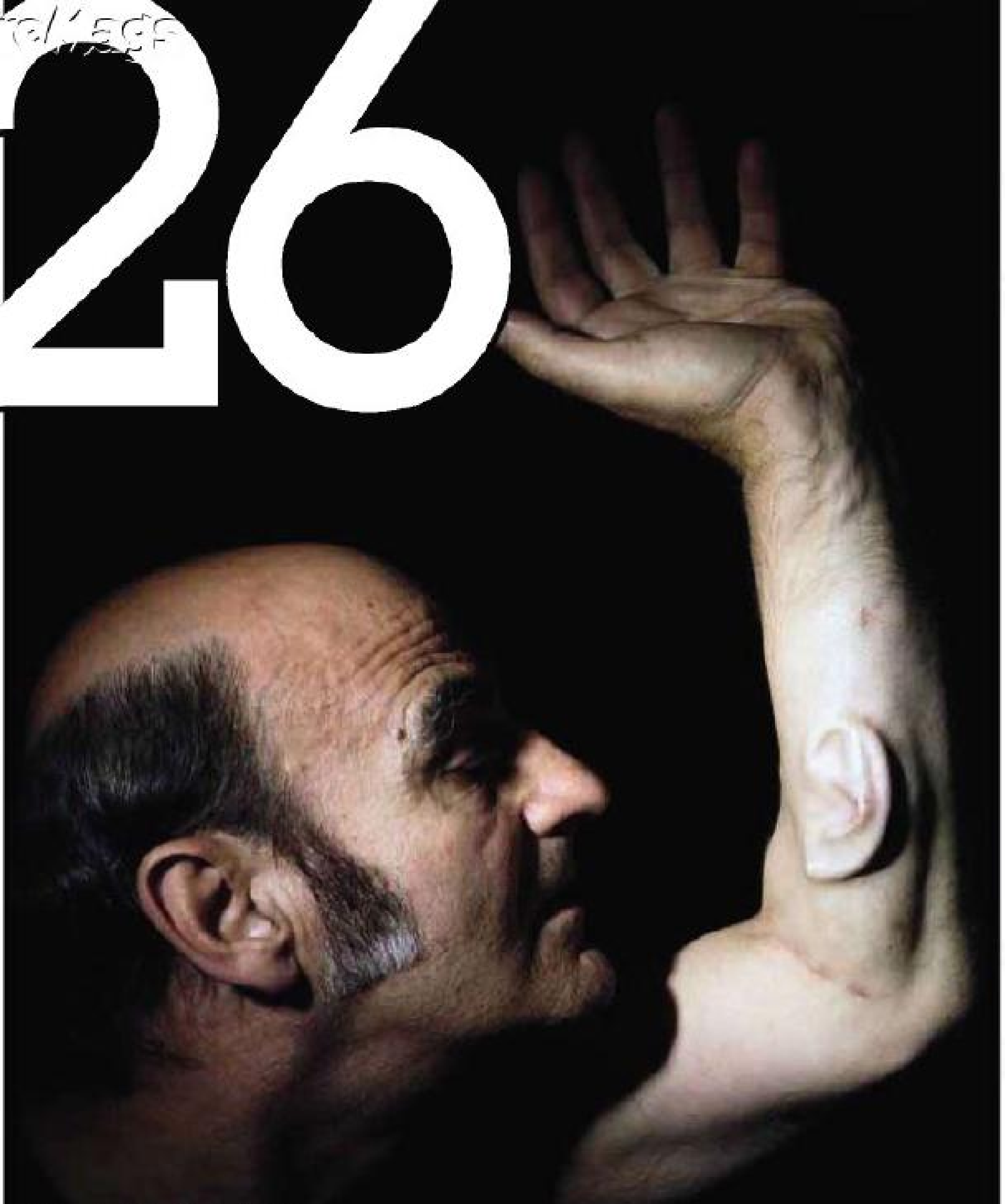
29

KRAFTWERK

WHO THEY? German electronic music pioneers.
WHY ARE THEY GEEK ICONS? Emerging from the burgeoning German 'Krautrock' scene in 1970, Kraftwerk are widely regarded as popularising electronic music. Their distinct style is a combination of repetitive electronic rhythms, with the vocals often supplied by software speech synthesis or vocoders. Notoriously reclusive, the band would often use life-size mannequins and robots to take part in official photoshoots... Oh, and they sing about Autobahns, computers, trains and cycling... so, what's not to like?





26

STELARC

WHO'S HE? Posthumanist performance artist who integrates robotics into his weird stage shows.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Known as Stelios Arkadiou to his mum, Greek-Australian Stelarc's shows play on the concept that, in the future, the human body will become obsolete, and that robots are vital if the human race is to survive. In Stelarc's most famous shows he allowed punters to control his body movements remotely using electronic muscle stimulators connected to the internet, performed with a robotic third arm, and straddled a six-legged walking machine that he controlled through arm gestures. In 2007, Stelarc had a cell-cultivated ear implanted under the skin of his left arm, which could pick up sounds with its internal microphone.

23

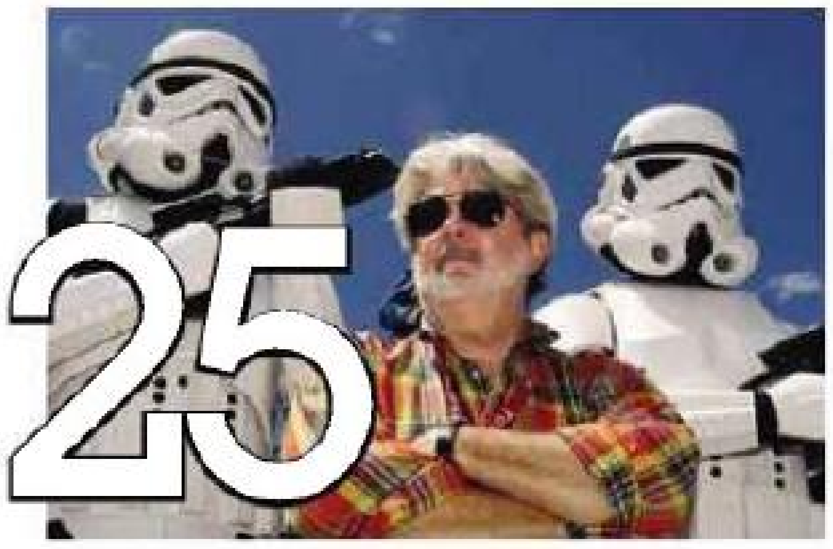
STEVE DITKO

WHO'S HE? Co-creator of Spider-Man.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Based on an idea by comicbook legend Jack Kirby, Stan Lee and Ditko collaborated to rework his heroic Spider-Man into a "ordinary teen" blessed with super powers. And while it was Lee who made Peter Parker like the awkward teenage boys who read his comics, Ditko designed Spidey's iconic costume and removed the gimmicky weapons and rippling muscles that most comic protagonists flaunted, creating the first down-to-earth hero that readers could *really* identify with.

22

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

WHO'S HE? Creator of manga epic *Akira*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? *Akira* introduced Western audiences to the possibilities of Japanese animation. With its sickening violence and super-cool characters, *Akira* became a cult favourite, especially when subtitled VHS tapes were shared among geek communities across the world. *Akira's* art style is also cited as an influence on every anime that followed, making Otomo a figurehead for the manga scene.



25

GEORGE LUCAS

WHO'S HE? The brains behind *Star Wars*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? When *Star Wars* was released in 1977, it sired a new generation of nerds weaned on robots and space battles, many of whom have gone on to create their own works of geeky goodness (that means you, Mr Pegg). Along with Stephen Spielberg, George also made archaeology sexy in the epic *Indiana Jones* flicks, and fostered a new wave of dweebs with the *Star Wars* prequels – tedious films that fans of the original trilogy despise, but somehow little kids understand.

JJ ABRAMS

WHO'S HE? Creator of *Alias*, co-creator of *Lost*, and director of the latest *Star Trek* film.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? The cryptic *Lost* took fan participation to a new level, where fake websites enhanced the plot and messageboards were watched by writers. Meanwhile, there were *Lost* Easter Eggs in videogames such as *World Of Warcraft*, it was referenced in shows such as *Scrubs* and *Family Guy*, and featured in music by Weezer and Senses Fail. Abrams won more hearts with his *Star Trek* reboot, and he's now working on a movie with Spielberg.

24

21

PHILIP K DICK

WHO'S HE? American sci-fi writer.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? It's impossible to sum-up Dick's contribution to pop culture in such as short space, so get on the internet and start your own research. In a nutshell, though (deep breath)… sci-fi classics *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall* were based on Dick's novels; his exploration of themes such as monopolistic corporations and altered states inspired countless sci-fi scribes; and philosophers still draw on Dick's fiction, using it as an engaging way to explain the concept of postmodernism. →

20

SHELDON COOPER

WHO'S HE? A theoretical physicist in geeky sitcom *The Big Bang Theory*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Cooper has an IQ of 187, but the reason for his inclusion on this list is his devotion to geek culture. While his scientist friends hide their obsessions with *Halo*, *Battlestar Galatica* and the like from girls, Sheldon wears his passions on his T-shirts. Leonard Nimoy and Stan Lee even have restraining orders against him...

19

JRR TOLKIEN

WHO'S HE? Author of *The Lord Of The Rings*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Everyone knows Tolkien created Middle-earth, but he's also one of *Bizarre*'s favourite geeks because he was an ultra-nerd about language; he once worked on the Oxford English Dictionary's 'W' section and laboured for months over the origins of the word 'walrus', spent most of his life studying linguistics, was an expert in Old Norse, Middle English and Medieval Welsh, and even created artificial languages from scratch for his epic fantasy books. Now *that's* geeky.

18

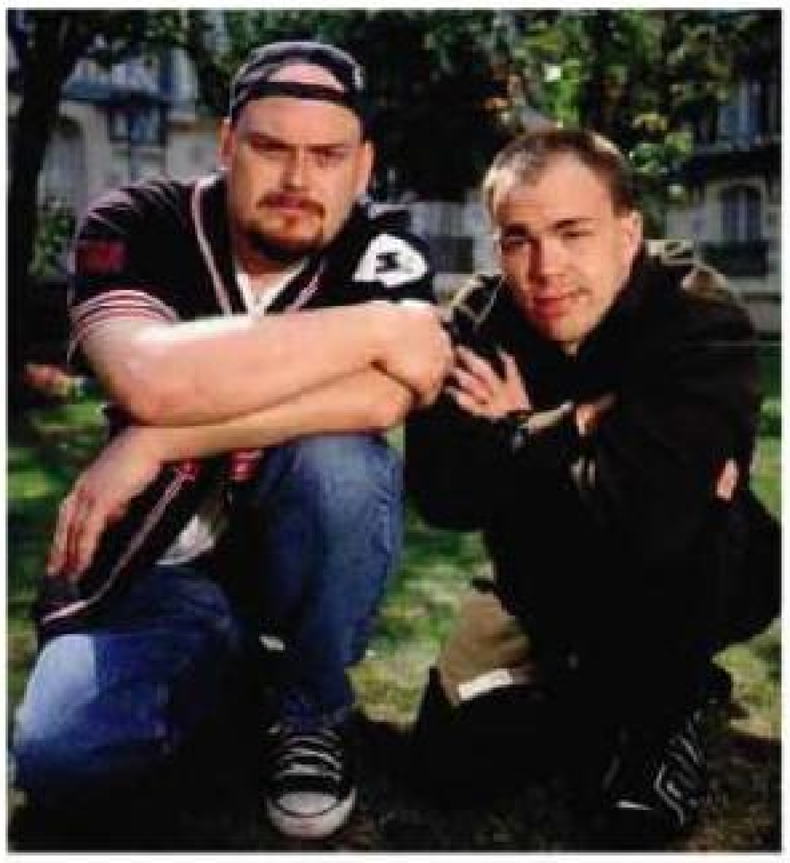
STEVE JACKSON & IAN LIVINGSTONE

WHO ARE THEY? Creators of the *Fighting Fantasy* books and founders of Games Workshop.
WHY ARE THEY GEEK ICONS? For nerds who didn't have pals to play *D&D* with in the 1980s, the Fighting Fantasy books were the perfect alternative, allowing solo players to choose their own path through the numbered paragraphs of a fantasy novel.

17

WACHOWSKI BROTHERS

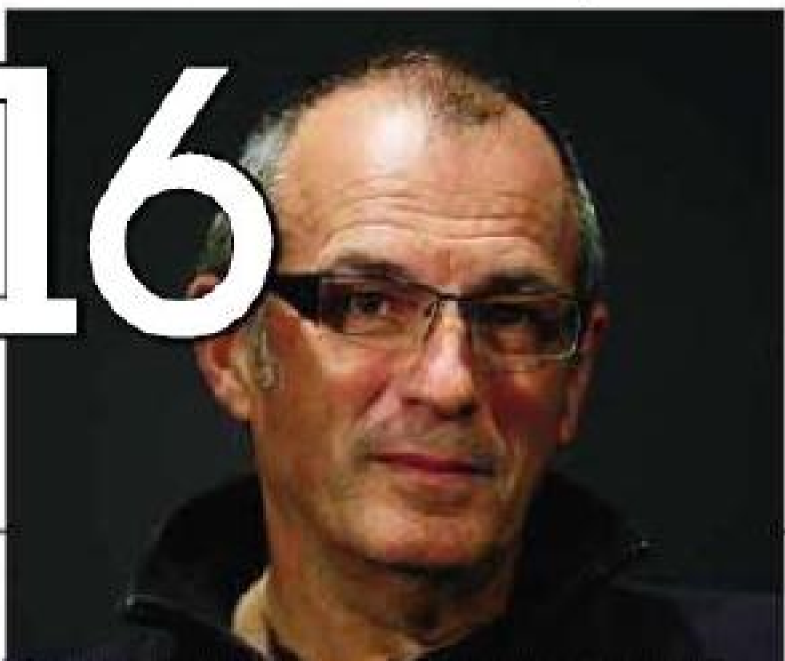
WHO ARE THEY? Directors and writers of Hollywood blockbusters including *The Matrix*.
WHY ARE THEY GEEK ICONS? Andy and Larry Wachowski are in this list for one reason: *The Matrix*. Although their ambitious cyberpunk series became increasingly silly as the trilogy limped on, the original *Matrix* is still a work of sci-fi genius, blending stylish characters, a sublime story and some of the most thrilling action sequences in movie history to create every nerd's messiest wet dream. Sadly, nothing the Wachowskis have done since has matched the intensity or imagination of *The Matrix*, and they certainly aren't in our Top 50 for *Speed Racer*...



DAVE GIBBONS

WHO'S HE? *Watchmen* comicbook artist.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? While it was Alan Moore who created *Watchmen*'s deep tale, Gibbons' contribution is just as important. His heavy-lined illustrations give the characters a sense of weight and intensity missing in fussier comicbooks, while his insistence on packing every frame with detail creates a vision of the US that's recognisable, but punctuated by flying cars and sparking hydrants that make it feel like a surreal dream. If you read *Watchmen* a dozen times, you'll notice new things in Gibbons' incredible illustrations on every return visit.

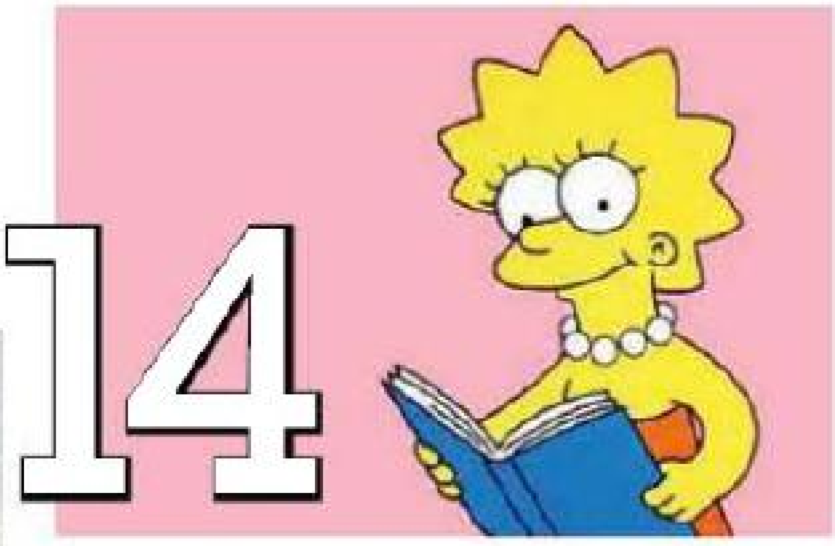
16



15

RALPH BAER

WHO'S HE? Move over Nolan Bushell, Ralph invented videogames – and don't you forget it!
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Without Ralph we'd still be reading books or – even worse – talking to each other. He invented the worlds first videogames system in 1966 with a defence project called the Brown Box (oo-er!), later sold commercially as the Magnavox Odyssey. He's also responsible for the first light gun and a popular memory game called *Simon*. Ralph continues to invent, develop and market electronic toys to this day, at the age of 88.



14

LISA SIMPSON

WHO'S SHE? The spiky-haired daughter of Homer and Marge in *The Simpsons*.
WHY'S SHE A GEEK ICON? While Homer's 'working' in the power plant, Marge is baking and Bart's hell-raising, eight-year-old Lisa's usually playing her sax or hitting the books. She has an IQ of 159, and once isolated the pheromone that makes bullies pick on nerds. But Lisa isn't a complete square – she loves Malibu Stacy dolls, pulls pranks with Bart and is compassionate towards her family. Her thoughtful personality has inspired countless young female fans.

13

JOSS WHEDON

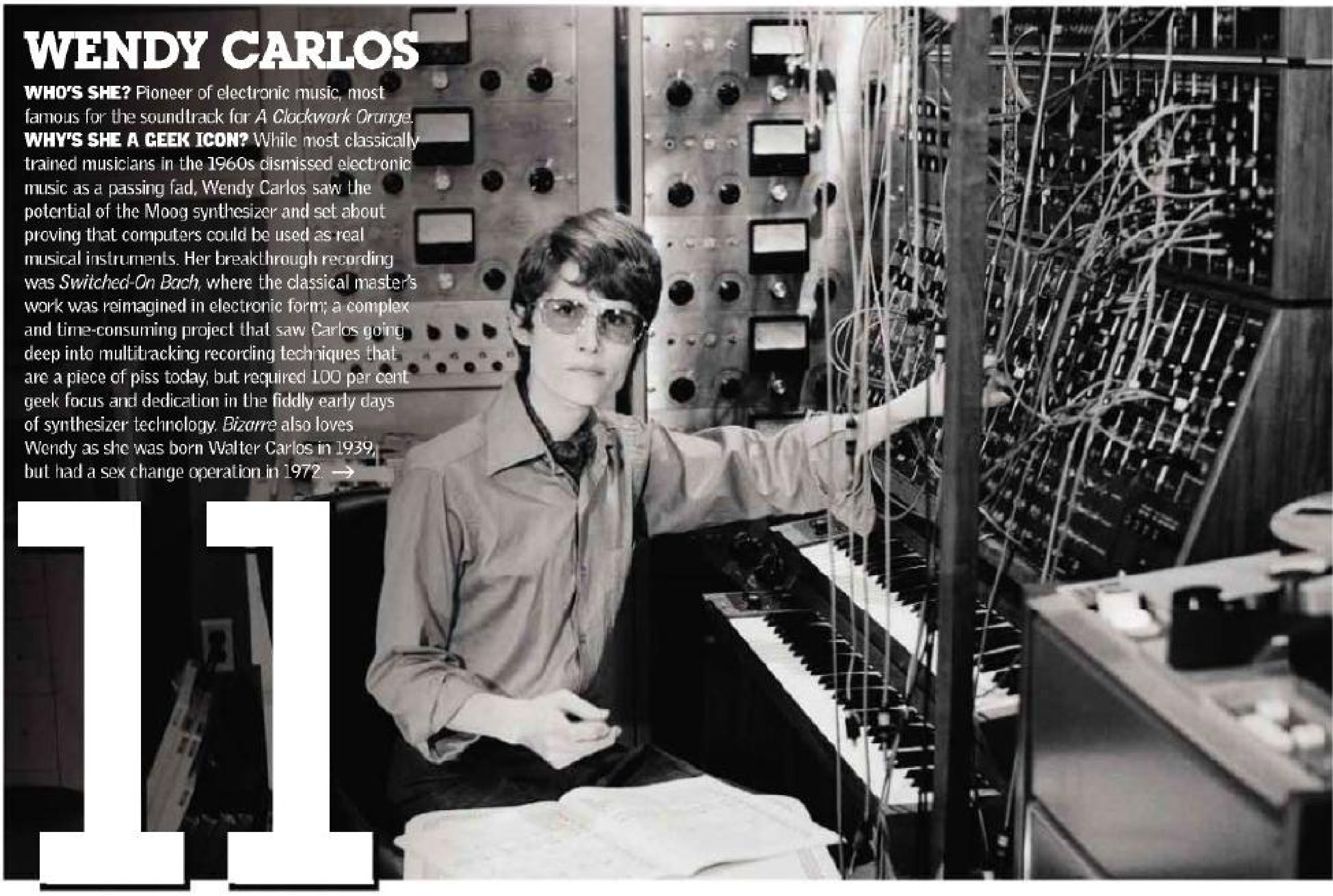
WHO'S HE? Creator of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Joss is *the* geek hero for a generation. *Buffy* took the trials and tribulations of being an unpopular teenager, and showed how friendship – along with Giles' dusty library and a dose of combat – could win the day. His other shows have also inspired devotion. When western sci-fi series *Firefly* was cancelled due to low viewing figures, after episodes were shown out of order, fans ('Browncoats') showed support for the series and the movie *Serenity* was made to conclude the story.

12

JONATHAN ROSS & JANE GOLDMAN

WHO ARE THEY? The posterboy and girl for nerd culture in the UK.

WHY ARE THEY GEEK ICONS? Jonathan Ross is the reigning nerd king, who's used his success as a TV host to champion the things he loves, such as cult movies, comicbooks and videogames. And in doing so, he's made them more palatable for Joe Public. Ross and Jane Goldman married in 1988, when she was 18 and he was 28. Since then she's ploughed her own deep dweeb furrow that's seen her co-writing the screenplays for *Kick-Ass* and the forthcoming *X-Men: First Class*. If *Bizarre* could spend a day geeking out with anyone, it would be J'n'J.

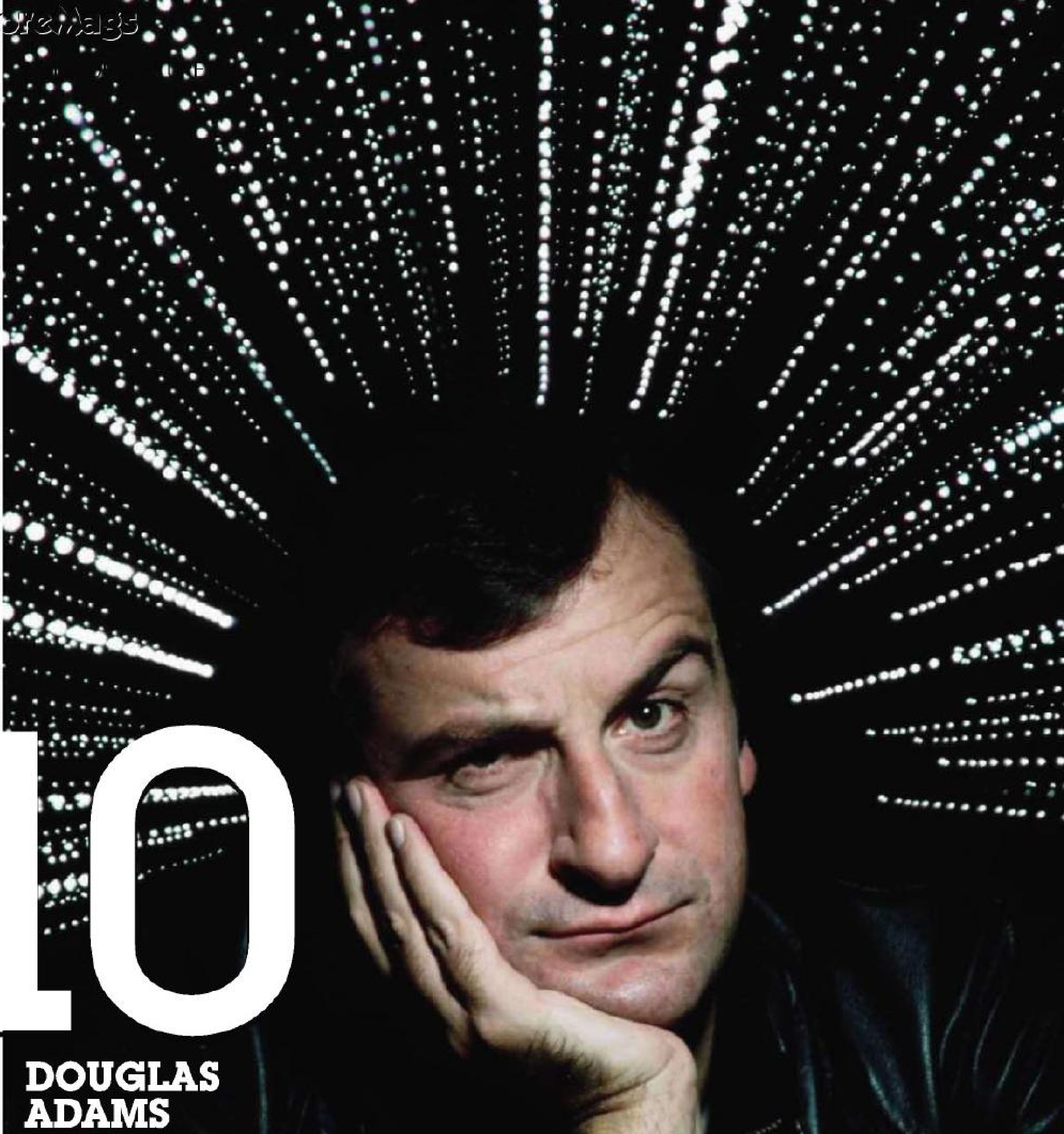


WENDY CARLOS

WHO'S SHE? Pioneer of electronic music, most famous for the soundtrack for *A Clockwork Orange*.

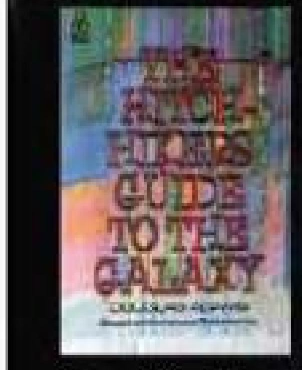
WHY'S SHE A GEEK ICON? While most classically trained musicians in the 1960s dismissed electronic music as a passing fad, Wendy Carlos saw the potential of the Moog synthesizer and set about proving that computers could be used as real musical instruments. Her breakthrough recording was *Switched-On Bach*, where the classical master's work was reimagined in electronic form; a complex and time-consuming project that saw Carlos going deep into multitracking recording techniques that are a piece of piss today, but required 100 per cent geek focus and dedication in the fiddly early days of synthesizer technology. *Bizarre* also loves Wendy as she was born Walter Carlos in 1939, but had a sex change operation in 1972. →

11



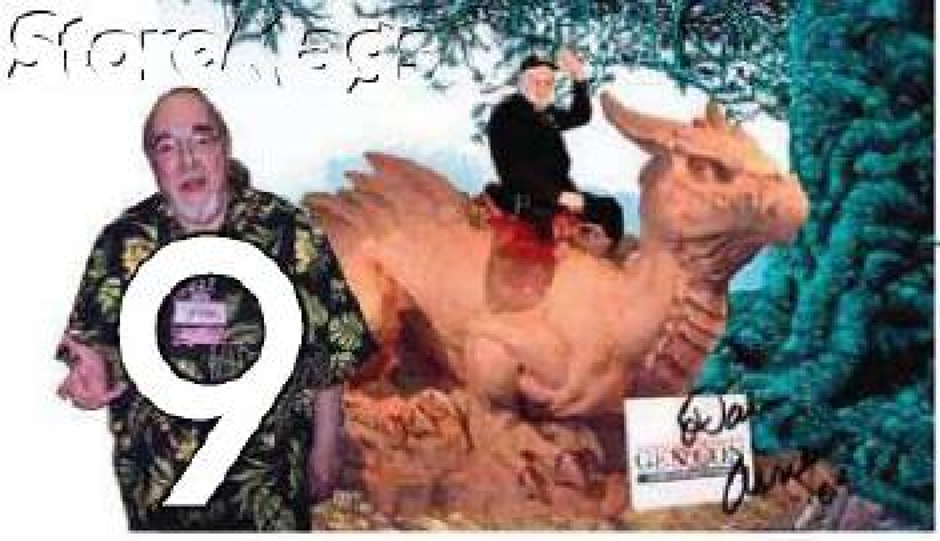
10

DOUGLAS ADAMS



WHO'S HE? Author of *The Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy*.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? While there's nothing geeks love more than the wild imaginings of sci-fi, there's a tendency for the genre to be po-faced, pedestrian and worthy, with many writers forgetting to entertain their audience while they obsess over the real possibilities of the future. But in *Hitchhikers*, Douglas Adams created a work of fiction that was fiercely intelligent, incredibly influential and hugely respectful of the science underpinning it, yet delivered with a razor-sharp wit that puts every other sci-fi comedy to shame. Still as fresh and funny as it was when it first aired on the BBC in 1978, the original radio drama is still essential listening for sci-fi geeks and anyone who enjoys deep irony, fucked-up logic and towels.



9

GARY GYGAX & DAVE ARNESON

WHO ARE THEY? *Dungeons & Dragons* creators.
WHY ARE THEY GEEK ICONS? While most kids in the 1970s and 80s were playing outside, the future vanguards of geek culture were sitting around kitchen tables, rolling dice and imagining they were exploring magical kingdoms. And while the original *D&D* only featured a handful of elements for which role-playing games are now famous, it set the standard for today's epic videogame RPGs.

8

BLIZZARD

WHO ARE THEY? *World Of Warcraft* developers.
WHY ARE THEY GEEK ICONS? This entry bucks *Bizarre*'s top 50 Greatest Geeks chart by celebrating a company rather than an individual. But as Blizzard unleashed *World Of Warcraft*, our top 10 wouldn't be complete without them. As well as having over 12m subscribers, *WoW*'s place in the pantheon of geekdom is ensured as it's fostered a loyal fanbase that's spilled outside the digital realm into real-world cosplay conventions, fan-fiction, and arguments over weapons and currency that don't actually exist.

NYSE
NYSE
NYSE

7

STAN LEE

WHO'S HE? The father of modern comicbooks.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? The co-creator of X-Men, Iron Man, the Hulk and dozens of other crimefighters, Lee helped transform superheroes from muscle-bound meatheads into characters with depth and flaws, whose feats of derring-do are punctuated by fits of bad temper and worrying about how they'll pay their rent or impress girls. Lee also never shied away from big issues such as racism and bigotry, setting the scene for today's graphic novels that are as significant as any work of fiction.

MARK ZUCKERBERG

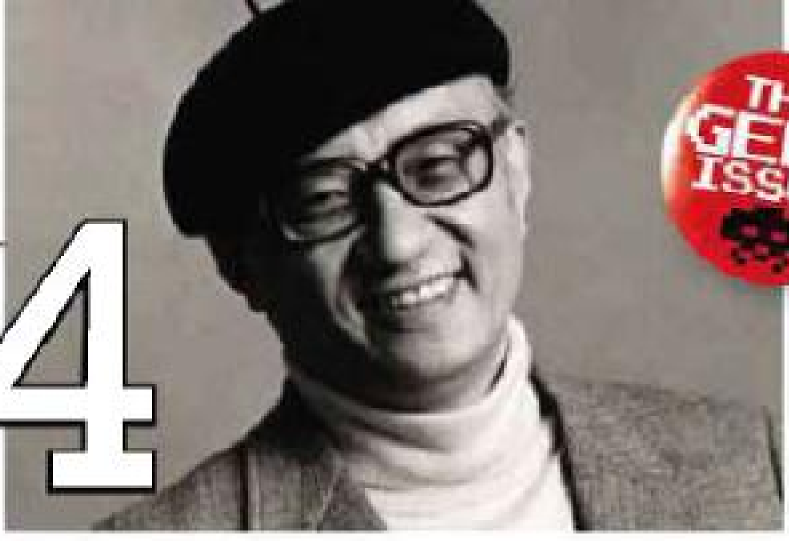
WHO'S HE? Co-founder of Facebook, and its CEO.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? How would we poke and stalk people if Facebook didn't exist? David Fincher's docu-drama *The Social Network* portrayed Zuckerberg as a single-minded student who made some bad decisions and lost his friends (he's still embroiled in a legal battle over Facebook's shares). But whatever you think about him, he's undeniably changed social networking, taking the crown from MySpace and gathering over 500m users.

6

SIMON PEGG

WHO'S HE? The geek's geek.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Pegg wears his influences on his sleeve. From the geek nirvana of *Spaced* – which is peppered with loving references to videogames, science-fiction films and cult horror movies – to the sublime *Shaun Of The Dead*, which played out as a love letter to George A Romero's zombie flicks, Pegg is proud to be a dweeb. And as if penning his own geek classics wasn't enough, Pegg has starred in sci-fi staples *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*. He's living the geek dream.

5



4

OSAMU TEZUKA

WHO'S HE? The Japanese 'Father Of Manga'.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Although a plethora of artists were responsible for the growth of Manga, Tezuka was the most important player. As well as creating *Astro Boy*, Tezuka pioneered the 'big-eyed' style of Japanese animation, having based his original sketches on US cartoon *Betty Boop*. In his youth Tezuka also shared a flat with influential manga artists Shotaro Ishinomori and Fujio Akatsuka, each of whom namechecked him as their mentor and inspired other artists to do things Tezuka's way.

3

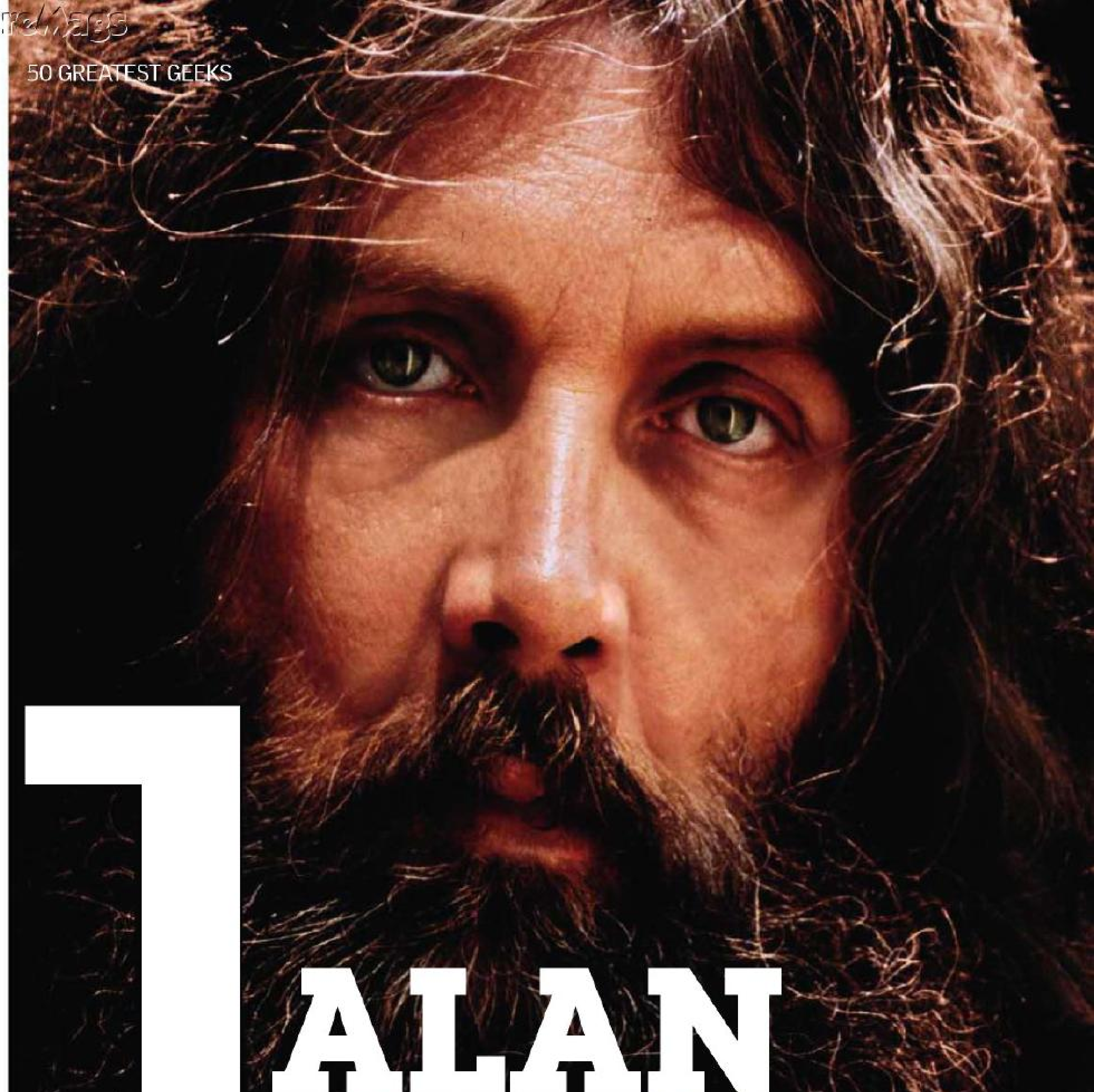
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO

WHO'S HE? Legendary Nintendo games guru.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? By creating some of the most famous faces to ever grace a console – including Mario and Donkey Kong – and taking the design lead on many of the world's most influential games, the shy outsider who spent his childhood exploring caves on the fringes of Koyto, and was never cut out to be a Japanese 'salaryman', helped create the geek business we know today.

2

NEIL GAIMAN

WHO'S HE? Graphic novelist and author.
WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? Not only is Gaiman responsible for successfully resurrecting DC comic character, Sandman, he's also the fantastical mind behind big-selling fantasy novels such as *American Gods*, *Stardust*, and *Coraline*, two of which have been snatched up by Hollywood. As if that wasn't impressive enough, he's also co-written screenplays for *MirrorMask* and *Beowulf*, and he's written an episode of *Doctor Who*. Everything Gaiman touches turns to geek gold. See more on p92! →



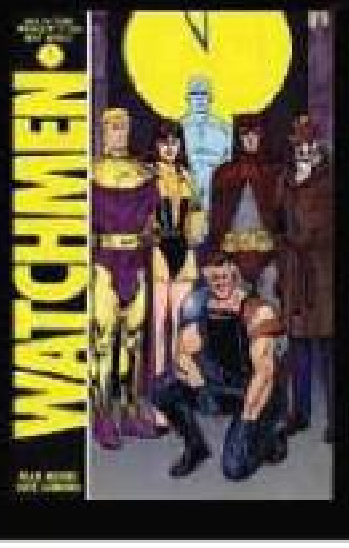
1

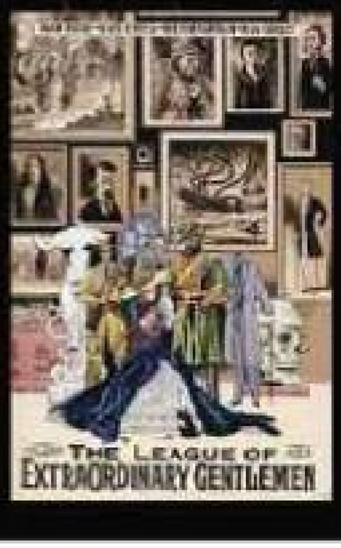
ALAN MOORE

WHO'S HE? Comicbook writer and author.

WHY'S HE A GEEK ICON? *Watchmen. The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen. V For Vendetta.* Moore has created some of the darkest, most adult works around, and is responsible for people re-branding comicbooks as graphic novels. And did we mention he's a magician? Alan still lives in his hometown of Northampton, which often features in his work, but his influence stretches worldwide, from Hollywood to anti-Scientology protestors in London wearing 'Anonymous' masks. A true *Bizarre* geek legend.

Step into the fourth dimension with Alan→





THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN VOL 1–2, TITAN BOOKS, £9.99
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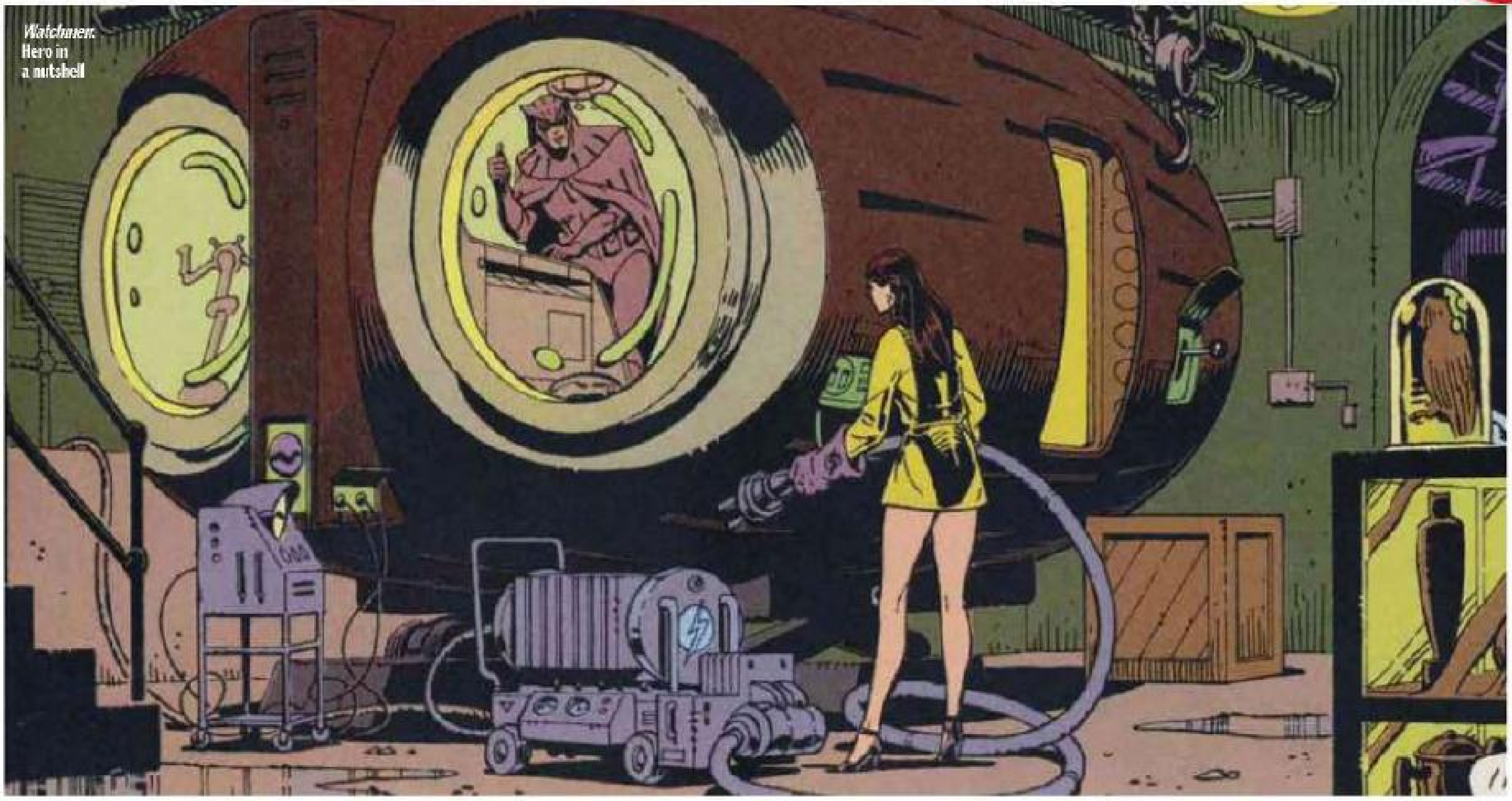


Watchmen: Hero in a nutshell

Talking to Alan Moore is like wandering through a philosophical fruitfarm. Today, he's telling *Bizarre* that he agrees with the idea of string theory; the branch of theoretical physics that argues there are more than three dimensions. The beardy author started thinking about the concept when he got older and realised he didn't have much time left on earth.

"Around the age of 50, I wouldn't say I had a mid-life crisis, but I couldn't kid myself I was halfway through my life," explains Moore, now 57. "I had to start thinking about what I thought of the idea of death, and I thought about it in terms of science – that we live in a universe, a continuum with four dimensions. The fourth dimension isn't time; it's a spatial dimension like the other three, but it's aligned in such a way that we can't perceive it. Our *perception* of this fourth dimension is the passing of time."

After Moore came to this conclusion, he began to see life as a never-ending story, where all of the chapters are played out again and again, continuously. "The universe is a four-dimensional solid, which contains every moment that's ever existed or will ever exist. "Because our perception of life moves through the solid, we have the *illusion* of change," he re-iterates. "When we get to the end of a book, the book doesn't turn to dust; we can read it again and again. And that's what I think must happen to human life."

His outlook echoes the character of Dr Manhattan in *Watchmen*, a human being made immortal by a nuclear accident. He doesn't perceive time in a linear way and is unaffected when earth is destroyed because he believes it is just another event in the whole of time – much to the anger of human girlfriend Laurie, who sees life as a finite amount of time between birth and death.

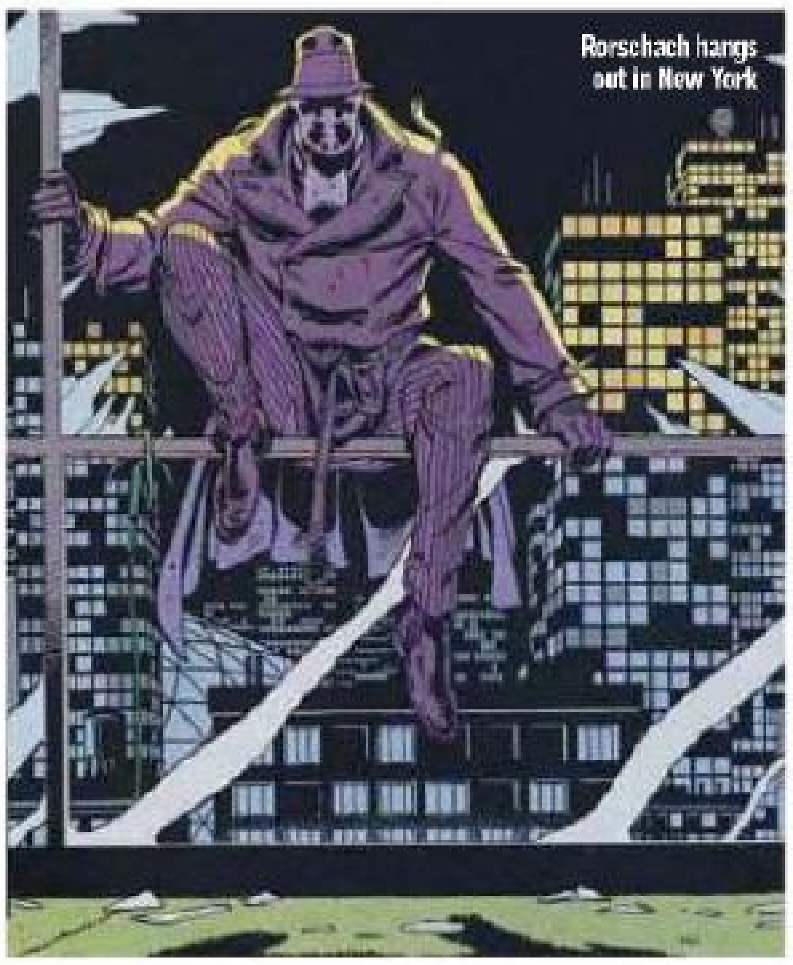
Thine is the kingdom

Moore's theory of four dimensions forms the basis of his second novel, *Jerusalem*. The title comes from the hymn of the same name, the text of which was written by Romantic poet William Blake. It's about the second coming of Jesus, where he creates a new Jerusalem among England's 'dark Satanic mills' – commonly thought to be the mills of the industrial revolution. Many Christians use the place where Jesus was crucified as a metaphor for heaven, and in his book, Moore envisions Northampton as Blake's Jerusalem.

Using the idea of four dimensions, *Jerusalem* follows the idea that, instead of there being a heaven or a hell, we're already in heaven *and* hell all the time, and we keep repeating our lives over and over again for eternity. "It's a nice way of explaining déjà vu," says Moore. "It isn't surprising when we feel as though we've experienced something before, because we *have* experienced it before." But while "good moments are paradise", this philosophy also dictates that we have to repeatedly face up to any bad decisions we make.

Jerusalem is woven from Moore's family history and – like his prose novel *Voices In The Fire* – Northampton's history, along with a heavy dose of fantasy. Its characters include James Joyce's daughter Lucia, who lived in the mental home next to Moore's school; Charlie Chaplin, who did one of his first performances in Northampton; and Moore's brother. As with *The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, many of those characters are disconnected from the time we think they would've lived in. But under the theory of the fourth dimension, all these characters and experiences are everlasting.

"Our perception of the fourth dimension is the passing of time"



Rorschach hangs out in New York

"It used to worry me that all of our rich experience would be lost if our species went down the tubes," reflects Moore, "but actually, if the nature of space-time is as Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking seems to think it is, then no atom of individual human experience can be lost; it's all still there, in this huge, unfathomable narrative."

For Moore, it's important that people's voices and events persist through time. He's an advocate of psychogeography – unearthing the forgotten voices of towns in order to bring back their personalities and prevent them from becoming homogenous. Moore experimented with exposing these voices in *From Hell*, a comicbook in which murdering doctor William Gull walks around London landmarks, such as Nicholas Hawksmoor's churches, illuminating their hidden mystical significance. Gull felt as though the true →

meanings of the churches had been lost because people assume they know all about them without taking the time to find out what occurred there or who helped shape their histories. By including the Hawksmoor churches in his comicbook, Moore was doffing his cap to psychogeographer and writer Iain Sinclair, who claimed they were built in a secret pattern and radiated dark forces. Moore believes that if a fourth dimension exists, then the voices of these churches won't be lost. But even if we can't perceive the fourth dimension, we should at least keep these voices alive, and come to appreciate and understand them.

"There's an awful lot of cultural information that's in danger or being lost forever," says Moore. "To be a complete human being, you have to develop your own way of seeing, and it starts with thinking about your local environment. Forget *Second Life* – we've come nowhere close to mastering our first life yet, and I think we need to encourage individual voices."

Forever and ever, Amen

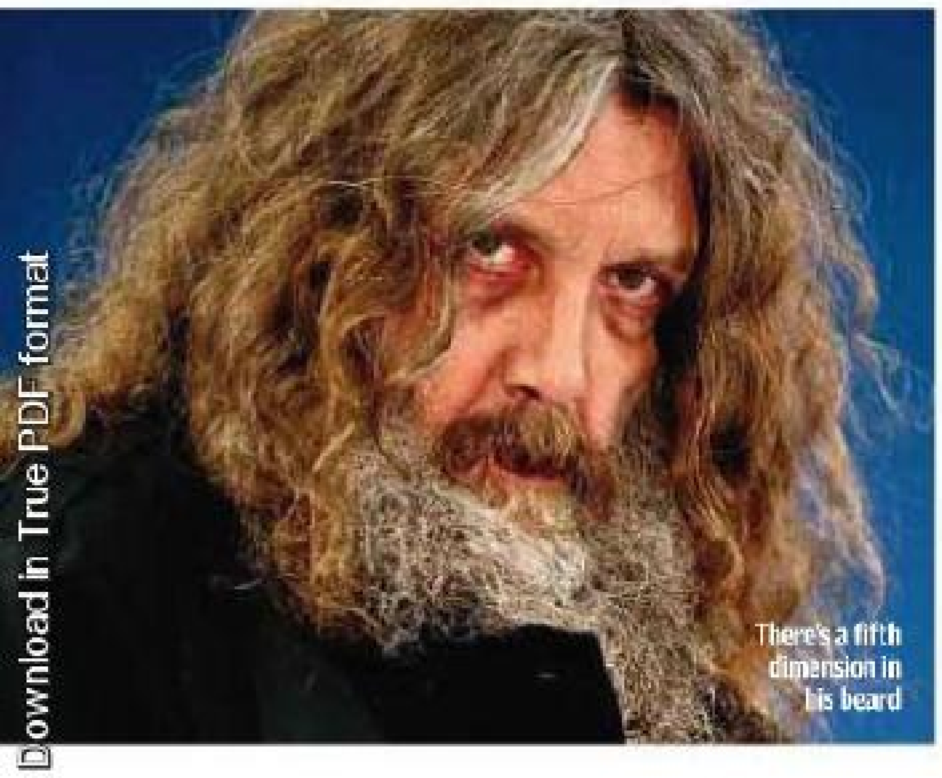
Moore finds comfort in the idea that four dimensionality makes us immortal, because it means that "every human life is precious and eternal", so no-one really dies. But not everyone agrees with him. "Some people I've discussed this with have looked at me with outright horror and said, 'That's the most horrible idea I've ever heard!'" he exclaims. "I guess it depends on what kind of life you're having..."

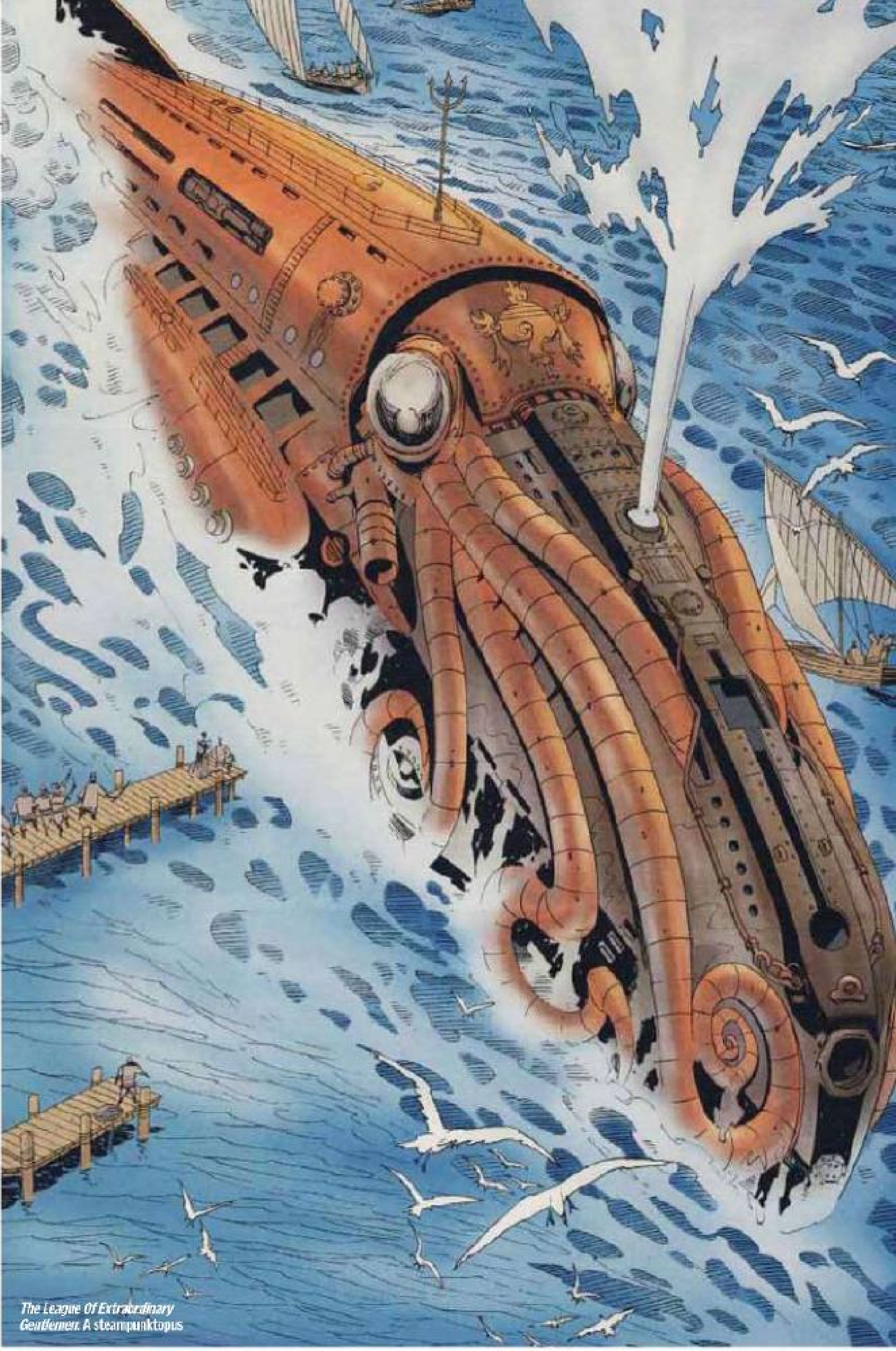
But in a similar way to Moore, Blake also found comfort in the idea of eternal life. Moore practises magic ritual – he's produced two CDs of performances, and occult-themed comicbook *Promethea* – and believes Blake used it to actually *see* the fourth dimension during his time on earth.

"Blake died without ever getting recognition for his work – one review said he was 'an unfortunate lunatic' – and yet he said, 'Well, I know that the angels in the beforetime really love my work, and the angels in the afterlife delight in my work, so why should it bother me if I'm ignored now?'" And it turned out he was right.

"Blake's big influence, Emanuel Swedenborg, invented the hovercraft, but also discovered why it could never be commercially viable, so he predicted its end at the same time as inventing it. After a series of visions, Swedenborg came up with the philosophy of always being in contact with angels or spirits, and one of the things he said was that angels have no knowledge of time. In my own experience of mystical or magical states, you get to a point that feels as though it's outside time. We can only assume that Swedenborg and Blake somehow used that state."

So far, Moore's written 26 chapters of *Jerusalem*, totalling a quarter of a million words, and still has nine chapters to go. If we really *are* living with a fourth dimension – whether we can perceive it or not – it's reassuring that we'll have eternity to contemplate Moore's mind-bending ideas.


There's a fifth dimension in his beard


The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen: A steampunktopus

"Forget *Second Life*, we've come nowhere close to mastering our first life yet"

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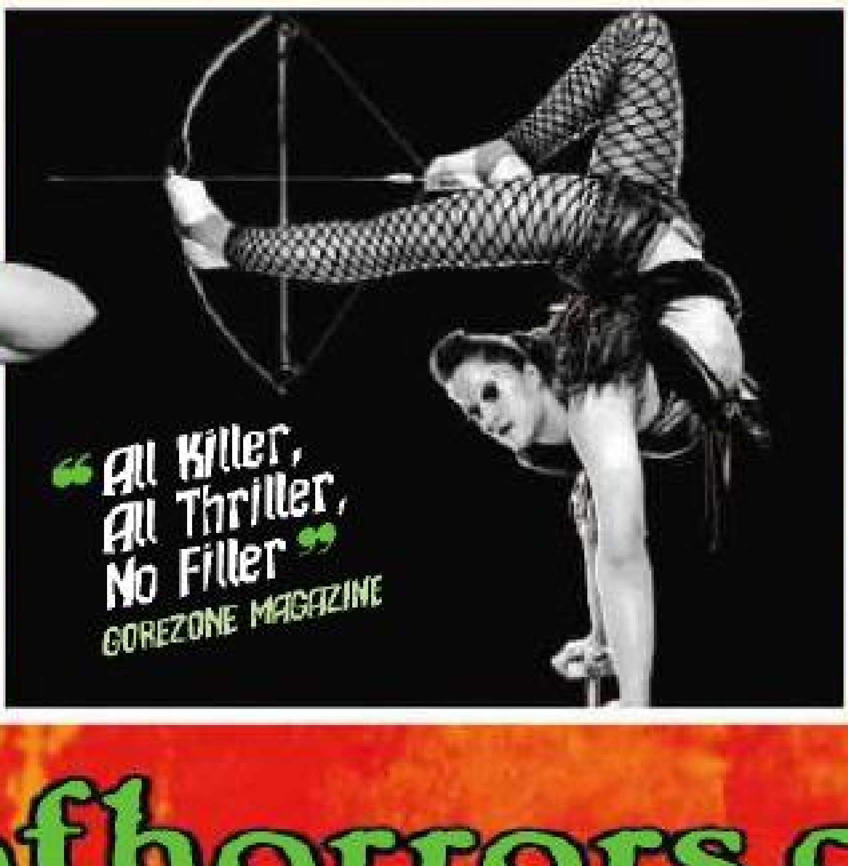
"All Killer, All Thriller, No Filler"
GOREZONE MAGAZINE

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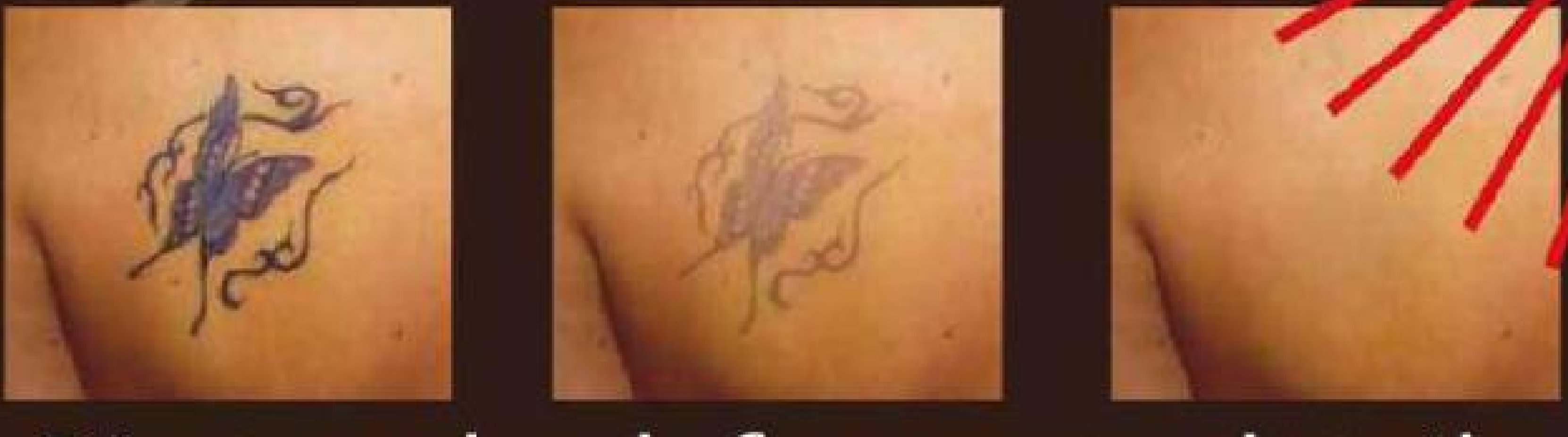

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THE GEEK ISSUE

COMIC STRIPPERS

WORDS **BRENDAN MCGINLEY**
PHOTOS **CHRISTOPHER LANE**

Flaunting their geekiness and their bodies, New York's Epic Win Burlesque are the ultimate entertainment for those stimulated by *Star Wars* and turned on by Trekkies →

Mary Cyn's gonna blow up this city

"I'm a huge *Legend Of Zelda* fan," gushes BB Heart, as she adjusts one of the elfin ears poking out from her brown hair. A second later, BB's boobs are bouncing in her black lace bra, as she tells us that she uses *Zelda* shields to hide her lovely lady-parts. "I hope you don't mind that I'm in my bra," she laughs. What? *Bizarre* mind? We'd never scorn an aerodynamic, unabashed geek in her delicates.

A self-professed nerd, BB is part of Epic Win Burlesque, a New York troupe of entertainers who celebrate geek culture with sexy shows based on nerd favourites such as *Ghostbusters*, *Batman*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and videogames. But if you're expecting coy Benny Hill chases around the *Pac-Man* park, forget it. Bawdy and funny, Epic Win are American burlesque through-and-through, a style that favours strip rather than tease. Goofing around as the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, Batman's nemesis the Joker, or a suicide victim – and dancing while wearing hairy merkins with vagina dentata – the troupe shock and awe with their uneasy, satiric edge.

Co-hosted by vaudeville magician Nelson Lugo and rapper Schäffer The Darklord, →

NELSON LUGO

After receiving a magic kit for Christmas, Nelson started conjuring when he was nine. Fed on a steady diet of comicbooks, videogames and sci-fi, Nelson's performances combine classic magic with a geeky twist, and he dreams of creating a magic act that combines *Batman*, *Doctor Who*, *Star Trek*, pretty ladies and pie.

Nelson and Schäffer bust some ghosts!

Lefty squeezes one out before spraying the audience with marshmallows

R2-D2, do that voodoo that you do so well

Nelson goes goo-goo ga-ga in ectoplasmic delight

SCHÄFFER THE DARKLORD

Nerdcore rapper and comedian STD used to be a rock drummer in San Francisco, and he melds metal attitude with quirky hip-hop beats. STD has written songs about clone-sex, Jesus' return as a zombie, and his obsession with nerd women.

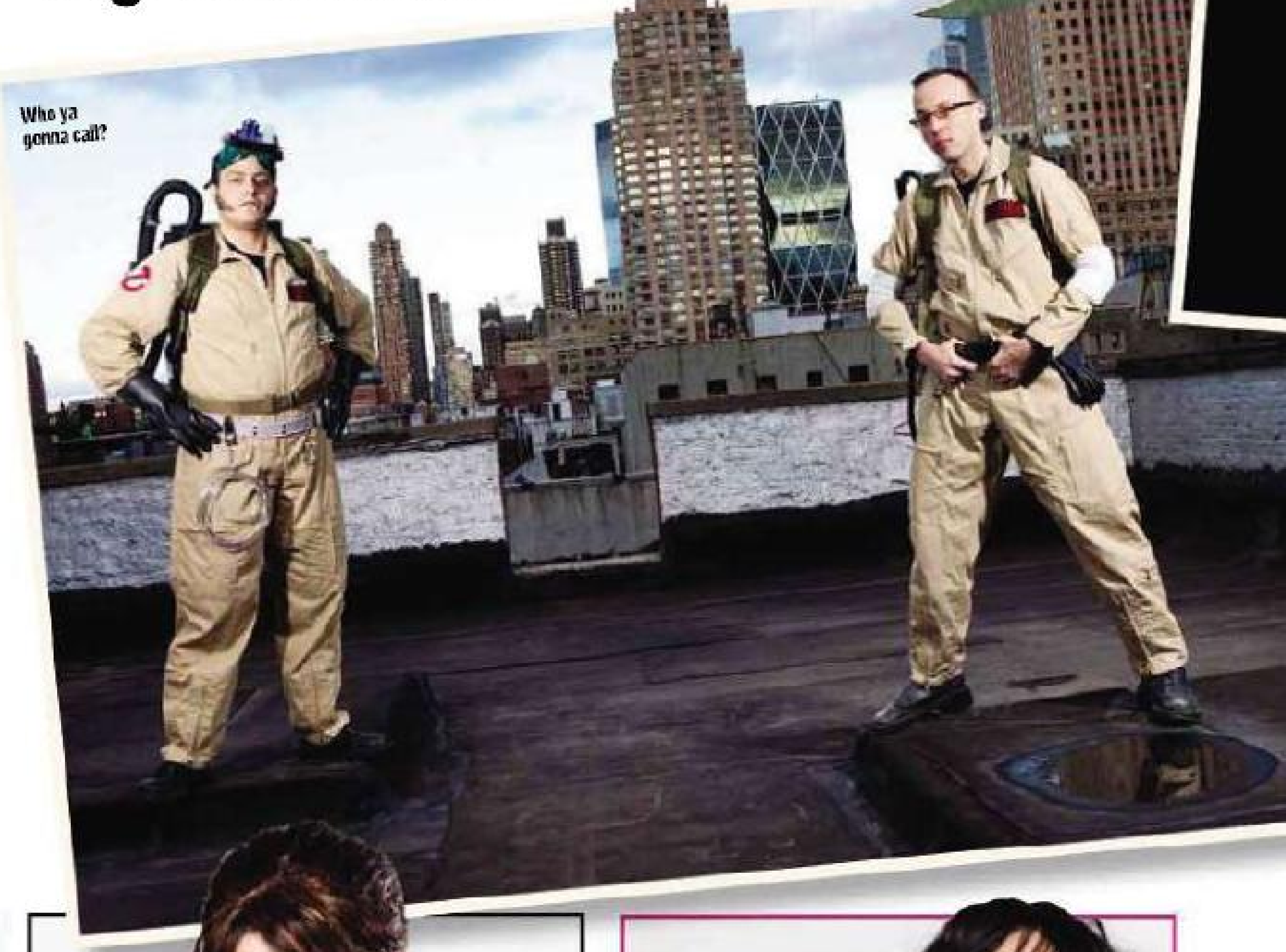
who are both local entertainers, Epic Win kicked off two years ago. After graduating at different times from the New York School Of Burlesque, Lugo and Schäffer met artists BB Heart, Lefty Lucy, Bonnie Voy'age, Victoria Privates, Magdalena Fox, and Mary Cyn through the city's close-knit burlesque community.

When Magdalena created a tongue-in-cheek act based on Lara Croft, Nelson joked that he and Schäffer had to produce a show around it. "The guys knew we were nerds," says Lefty. "And before anyone knew it, Epic Win was a done deal." By poking fun at themselves and their obsessions, the crew drew a huge crowd at their first show at The Tank theatre, and the venue begged them to play more nights.

DRAWING BLOOD

To keep their shows fresh, the troupe regularly creates new acts. Lefty likes to take characters "that aren't necessarily in-your-face sexy", and build from there. But most of the sets come from backstage jokes, such as a prank that Schäffer played on Nelson at a *Batman*-themed show. Nelson is a lifelong *Batman* fan, so when they did a performance based on the superhero, he pounced at the chance to put on bat ears. To scupper his moment, Schäffer, who was playing the Joker, ignored the script during the second half of the show, dressed up a couple of friends as thugs, then got them to grab Nelson and hold him hostage. It made his night to see the Joker being such a… um, joker.

The troupe goof around, wearing merkins with vagina dentata



Who ya gonna call?

LEFTY LUCY

This self-defamed goofball's geek cred extends beyond comics to nerdcore rap. "I was a fangirl before I ever met Schäffer," she says. "It's weird being friends with someone when you know all the words to their songs."

MAGDALENA FOX

Videogame and comic nut Magdalena loves assless Amidala costumes and, in her new act as Rorschach from *Watchmen*, she peels off layers of masks to change expressions. She once played Neil Gaiman's titular Sandman, Morpheus.

BB HEART

BB loves anime, tofu cheesecake and the Renaissance era. Fusing the art of striptease with drama, BB can be found on burlesque stages all over New York, and with her troupe, Storybook Burlesque.

"Always going forward 'cause we can't find reverse..."

Epic Win's bombastic nerd nights also send theatre-goers into a frothing frenzy. "During a show based on *Ghostbusters*, the walls bled with geek blood," quips Lugo, a smirking illusionist with 'Nerd!' tattooed on his arm. On the night, Lefty lumbered through the audience in a homemade Stay Puft Marshmallow Man costume padded with real marshmallows, and when she began to dance to Pat Benatar tunes, the spongy treats spilled out from strategically placed vents. "Marshmallow carnage" ensued, and the audience trampled the squishy sweets into ectoplasm, which took the cast an hour to clean up at the end of the night.

IN STITCHES

That ghostbusting costume was one of scores of bonkers outfits that the performers have made themselves. Taking up to two months to put their creations together, the dancers' homes are littered with rhinestone sledgehammers and life-sized steampunk R2-D2s. Mary Cyn's mother was a costume designer and the other dancers are dab-hands too, so even when they buy clothing, the dancers often break it down and stitch it back together so they can glide in and out of their gear more easily.

Today, Lefty is dressed as videogame character Carmen Sandiego in a Dolce & Gabbana comic-print frock, but you might catch her as an extra from *Dr. Seuss* or the schismatic Delirium/Delight from Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* comics. No transformation is too difficult, and when Lefty arrived late for a show, then realised that her robo-costume was lying at home, she got to work with three rolls of aluminium foil and was soon dancing in full garb to 'Mr Roboto', by Styx.

The props are a giggle, too. Mary, who loves obscure comicbooks and *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, has launched her own bi-weekly show at a metal dive, which is full of horror memorabilia. Her favourite stage aid is the Joker's gun, which "looks realistic and is damned sexy", and her top transformation is Gozer, the main villain from *Ghostbusters*.

IN ON THE ACT

Epic Win has helped many nerds to cross proton streams, and with costumes to make, acts to create, and performances to hone, the dancers are dedicated to their nerddom, despite falling into burlesque unexpectedly. Before joining Epic Win, Mary was doing dance-related acts, but had nowhere to perform. "Most of the stuff I did was about sex and when a friend of mine saw burlesque she said, 'Why aren't you doing this?'"

It also took Victoria Privates a while to find her calling. She took a burlesque class two years ago to have fun and make friends, but now she's so embedded in the community she calls non-burlesquers "muggles", and is leading a double life – working a day job she doesn't care about.

The troupe's passion for geekery is taking them from strength to strength, but they're coy about their plans for the next year. They're negotiating an appearance at the nerd rock and nerdcore hip-hop festival Nerdapalooza, at an undisclosed location, and they're putting together a new batch of shows. But the only act they'll spill on is entitled 'Rated R for Violence', which will be a "gory, fun, tongue-in-cheek" homage to classic scenes in horror and action. First and foremost the show is "sexy", declares Lugo. "And funny," counters Schäffer. Nelson agrees, piping up, "Once it stops being fun, that's when I'll stop."

For more, visit Epicwinburlesque.com and Thetanknyc.org

MARY CYN

A classically trained actor, Mary takes her clothes off with panache. She's the founder and co-producer of Original Cyn, and has been performing burlesque since 2005. She's got a kinky sense of humour and loves twisted dance moves.

VICTORIA PRIVATES

This villain from Storybook Burlesque preys on the souls of those foolish enough to trust her seemingly innocent face. She's performed at Sweet & Nasty Burlesque, Paul Booth's Annual Halloween show, and the 2009 All Points West Music Festival.

BONNIE VOY'AGE

A comicbook nerd, Bonnie didn't perform with Epic Win at Nerdapalooza geek festival in Orlando because she couldn't miss San Diego Comic-Con. Her first show was at the legendary New York gentleman's club, the Pussycat Lounge.

LIVE PICTURES: BEN TRIVETT (BENTRIVETT.COM). SPECIAL THANKS TO THE TANK FOR LETTING BIZARRE USE THE THEATRE AS A PHOTO STUDIO

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LARP-ing About!

Bizarre's **Ciaran McCauley** clutches his broadsword and thrusts himself into the UK's biggest live action role-playing game

WORDS **CIARAN MCCAULEY**
PHOTOS **JOE PLIMMER**

Charge? Ciaran prepares to do battle at The Gathering

In a barren, sand-swept land called Tenkswatawa, we're ready to charge. The sight of our enemies – almost 1,500 warriors, armed and baying for our blood – is breathtaking. Plenty of them aren't even human, with elves, were-men and other assorted beasties scattered through their ranks and ready to get medieval on our asses.

Fortunately, we have plenty of allies from all species and our numbers are just as formidable. For me, Jamie McCaullich, about to rush into my first mass battle, excitement grips my brain almost as hard as my hand grips my sword.

Except, I'm not really Jamie McCaullich. And we're not really in Tenks-wherever – we're in a field near Spondon, in rural Derbyshire. →

Twilight's Bella needs a fingering from a *real* were-man

The titans clash as the battle lines meet

Paul Harrison (left), AKA Hafilax the goblin

I'm Ciaran McCauley: clueless journalist and live action role-playing (LARP) virgin. Four days ago I arrived at The Gathering, the UK's biggest LARP event, with a tent, no kit, scant understanding of the rules and an aversion to dressing up. Now I'm wielding a sword, wearing a kilt and looking for a scrap. I'm not so much a fish-out-of-water as a fish-in-a-time-machine, who's emerged into the middle of an intense bout of Dark-Ages carnage.

LARPing is based on the premise of traditional tabletop role-playing games, such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, but players act out their characters' actions in the real world, closely resembling historical re-enactment or improvisational theatre. The Gathering has been running since 1991 and now attracts over 3,000 hardcore geeks keen to indulge in a weekend of spells, swords and mead.

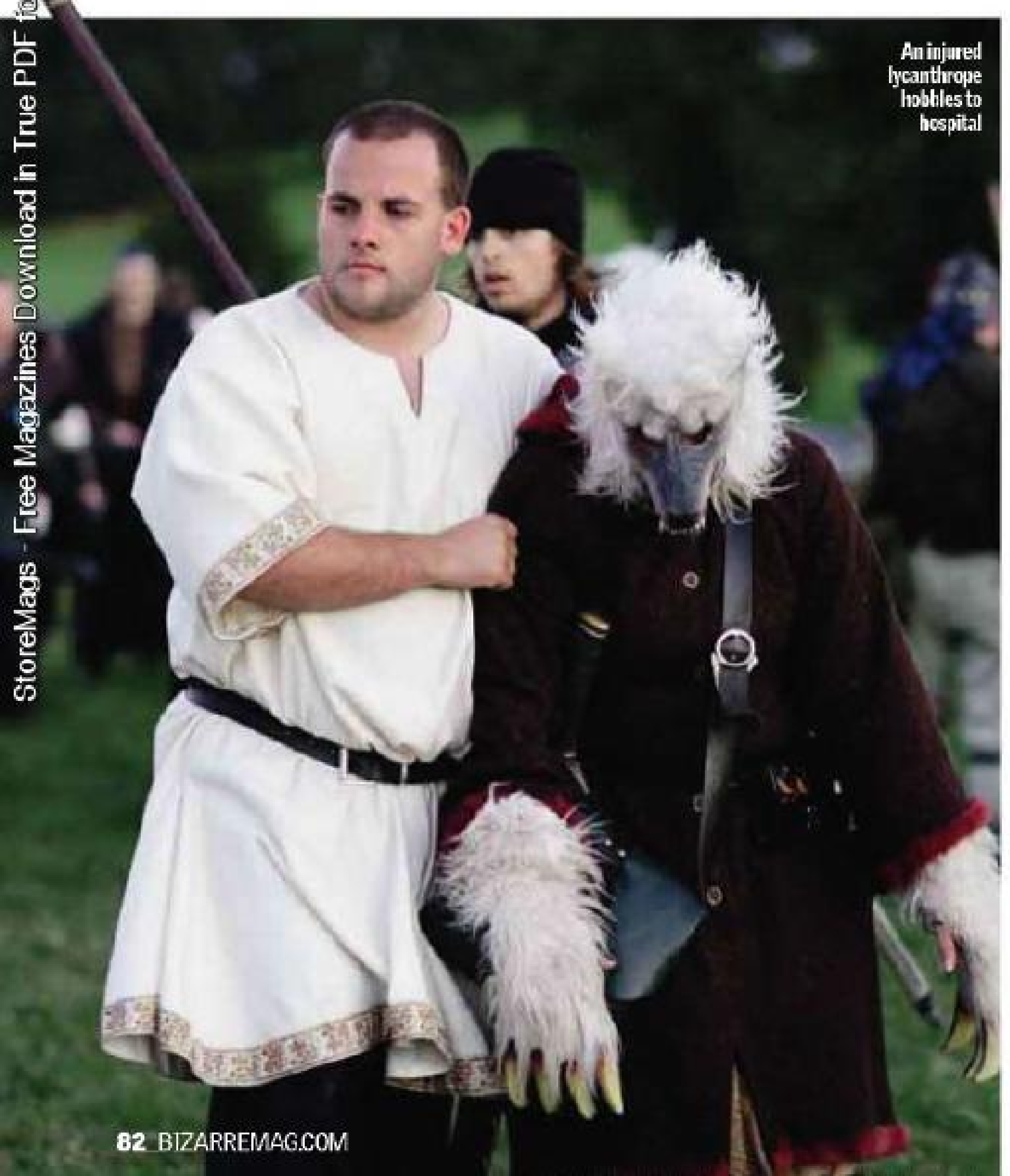
A dragon's tale

Arriving on site at Locko Park on a wet Thursday, I'm met by a stressed Chris Herriot, organiser for LARP events company the Lorien Trust. He volunteered to help the maintenance crew for The Gathering 16 years ago, but now runs the whole gig and is responsible for months of intensive planning and more than 200 staff. Meanwhile, attendees admit to spending £6,000-£10,000 on travel, kit and resources. "Working in production years ago was easy, but managing the game can be scary," he says. "This is a holiday for people and every plot decision we make will affect the game for years."

The Lorien Trust's plots have been running year-round since the game's inception almost two decades ago, and are dementedly complex. All play takes place on a planet called Erdreja, which is a giant egg encasing a baby dragon (stay with me). The Gathering is the annual meeting of the 10 factions, or nations, who make up the Heartlands of Erdreja, an area that roughly corresponds to Europe. All players are attached to factions or guilds, which are neutral groups responsible for training in skills such as archery or medicine.

Fortunately, it's sufficient for me to know that the weekend will involve a lot of fighting. The weapons are fake, although many are still heavy and pack a decent wallop during chaotic skirmishes. But Chris assures me LARPing is safe. "The worst I've seen in the 16 years I've been LARPing is a guy who got a slipped disc and another person who was hit in the throat with a spear – not pleasant," he says, knowingly. "I can also count on one hand the number of times we've needed the police. At a rock festival you'd get 25-30 incidents per day. LARPing is safe and provides something for everybody."

Our tour takes in the faction campsites and a central market area, which has in-character tents for each guild, stalls selling arms and clothes, and some incongruous, if obligatory, burger vans. One surprise is the amount of women and children in attendance, as I'd imagined that almost all LARPers were male.



An injured lycanthrope hobbles to hospital

"Stay aloive, Ciaran, we will foind you"

Oh, how the brave have fallen

Medieval biccies were kept under pan hats

Plague-ridden creatures of the night take in Hellboy

I'm in a time machine, wielding a sword, in a kilt, looking for a scrap

Wanna be in my clan?

Given my Celtic background, Chris explains that I'll be pitched in with the Scottish-based Bears for the weekend. Hailing from Caledonia, which is the old Roman name for Scotland, the Bears are fierce warriors, who love the finer things in life, such as beer, women and kilts. I could likely fit right in – but I'm nervous. There's a possibility my newbie-ness could ruin someone's weekend, not to mention the fear that people will ignore me because of the unflattering press that LARPing has received.

Fortunately, two of the first LARPers I meet, Mark Chilvers and Rob Sellwood, give me invaluable help. Rob, a 38-year-old from Berkshire, has been LARPing since university and attending The Gathering since 1993. "A few friends and I began organising LARPing events around college," he recalls. "My first adventure was at night on Mendip Hills in Somerset – we felt a real sense of, 'What are we doing?' But we got into it and I haven't looked back since."

Usually, Rob is a quality assurance manager, but this weekend he's Brudei of Clan Bruid, a Pictish archer in the Bears with the special ability to cook fine garlic mushrooms. For him LARPing is all about reuniting with old friends. "We're a community that transcends LARPing in a field in Derby," he says. "Some people who met each other in the Bears have got married and had children. For a hobby, we're quite lucky in that respect."

Mark, a 44-year-old drama teacher from Lincolnshire, was at the first Gathering in 1991 and helped found the Bears faction. "I had an amazing time and got immersed in it," he explains. "Having done A level drama I found it easy to fit in. At the time my mother was suffering from Alzheimer's and the event was total escapism. I'm hooked by the camaraderie of LARPing and its distance from the real world."

LARPing is all about self-expression. In the real world, Mark's a former inter-varsity fencer and gigging singer-songwriter with a background in theatre. So, as Rab McCaullich, he's the faction's expert on swordsmanship, he makes LARPing kit, such as belts and armour, and he's a bard, who leads the nightly campfire sing-alongs. And his ability to speak in a realistic Scottish accent puts the rest of us to shame.

Axing for trouble

To my relief, Mark adopts me into the Clan McCaullich and lends →

"Grrrrr!"

"We thought this was Glastonbury"

Sex workers in Tenkswatata only accept stel

Ciaran swings his tackle during the Bears' wardance

Feline frisky and ready for a catfight

me a whole bunch of faction-friendly LARP gear, including a kilt, belts, armour and weapons. The next day I'm introduced to my fellow clans-people – Calum, Fergal, Mary Clodagh and Willum – and take my place as Wee Jamie McCaullich, Highlander.

The transition into character is a crucial part of LARPing, but I find it immensely difficult. I keep forgetting my back-story and almost become unstuck when someone asks me why they haven't seen me around the Highlands before. "Oh," I flail. "I spent a lot of time with the sheep!" Yup, I really dodged a bullet there…

Adjusting to my clan is also tricky. The McCaullichs are the far-right conservatives of the faction and they hate non-humans or 'Greenskins.' When a pleasant guy I'd met on the first night, Paul Harrison, approaches me in character as Hafilax the Goblin (see previous page), I have to blank him and I feel awful.

Even real-world structures, like currency, are different in Erdreja. Here money is plastic little coins called Stel, which can be exchanged for weapons, mead or even a bit of action at one of the faction brothels. In reality, 'brothels' only offer a massage and a cup of tea, although everyone reacts like you've just paid to get laid.

But as the weekend progresses, I become more immersed in the daily routine, which revolves around fighting and drinking. Fellow clansman Calum, AKA Dale Skey, explains that battles are a big part of LARPing's appeal. "After my first battle I was addicted," enthuses the giant, rugby-playing 34-year-old. "The fear and the rush of adrenaline got me."

Fergal, or pharmacist Jono Dewhurst, chips in. "I love the fact that despite being fat and unfit I can kick most people's asses with practice, experience and metered aggression," he beams.

But battling carries the threat of character death and losing years of role-playing. If a character is hit hard, they could become mortally wounded and must be treated by a 'healer'. If the player isn't treated in time they die and then create a new identity.

Losing a character is a strangely emotional experience, explains 32-year-old law lecturer and role-player Simon Bailey. He came to this Gathering as Ibn, a mage he'd been playing for eight years, who he describes as a "an exploration into the darker side of the human psyche". But his character is killed during our weekend, leaving Simon, and the faction, grief-stricken.

"It was hard," he admits. "It sounds insane, but I did mourn the character." Always prepared, the LARPing veteran quickly assumed a different persona – the friendly, charmer Lannister – but the ghost of Ibn lives on. "It's difficult because I can't share myself with old friends in the faction," he says. "But it'll get easier. People who've lost characters say it takes about four events to fully find your feet with a new one."

He misread the memo. It said remember your chain*mail*

Out for the count

"Freedom!"

Tiki-tastic Aztec thingies set the… um, scene

'Ego nunquam pronunciari mendacium! Sed ego sum homo indomitus'

Ciaran's no match for the lasses

"I was addicted after my first battle. The fear and rush of adrenaline got me"

Fantasy fiction

One of the biggest problems with character creation is that fantasy can bleed into reality. Dale admits to occasionally thinking like Calum and wishing he could throw people out of the way in the supermarket queue. Immersion is key to the LARPing experience, but too much can be a bad thing. "Escapism is great as long as it's under control," says Mary Clodagh, or Rebecca Wynter, an Oxford-based graphic designer. "For some people it becomes their lives and they stop putting effort into the real world. I've seen it happen."

Strangely, in just one weekend, I can understand her point. Being Jamie, who has none of the real-world pressures, such as work, money and family, is an odd, yet addictive experience. While I'm being him, the idea of returning to my daily, adventure-free routine isn't appealing.

Perhaps that's why some people think that LARPing is socially unacceptable. There's a lazy misconception that LARPers are limp-wristed, fantasy-obsessed über-geeks in a constant state of arrested development. Mark admits to telling mates it's historical re-enactment – an almost identical pastime, yet strangely more acceptable – while others relate tales of disbelieving or resistant family members, friends and colleagues.

But they *are* über-geeks, and proud of it. Everyone that I meet says LARPing has *enhanced* their lives. Jono explains that it can make people more self-assured. "We can switch on confidence when we need it, such as for job interviews or when we're chatting up someone who's way out of our league," he says.

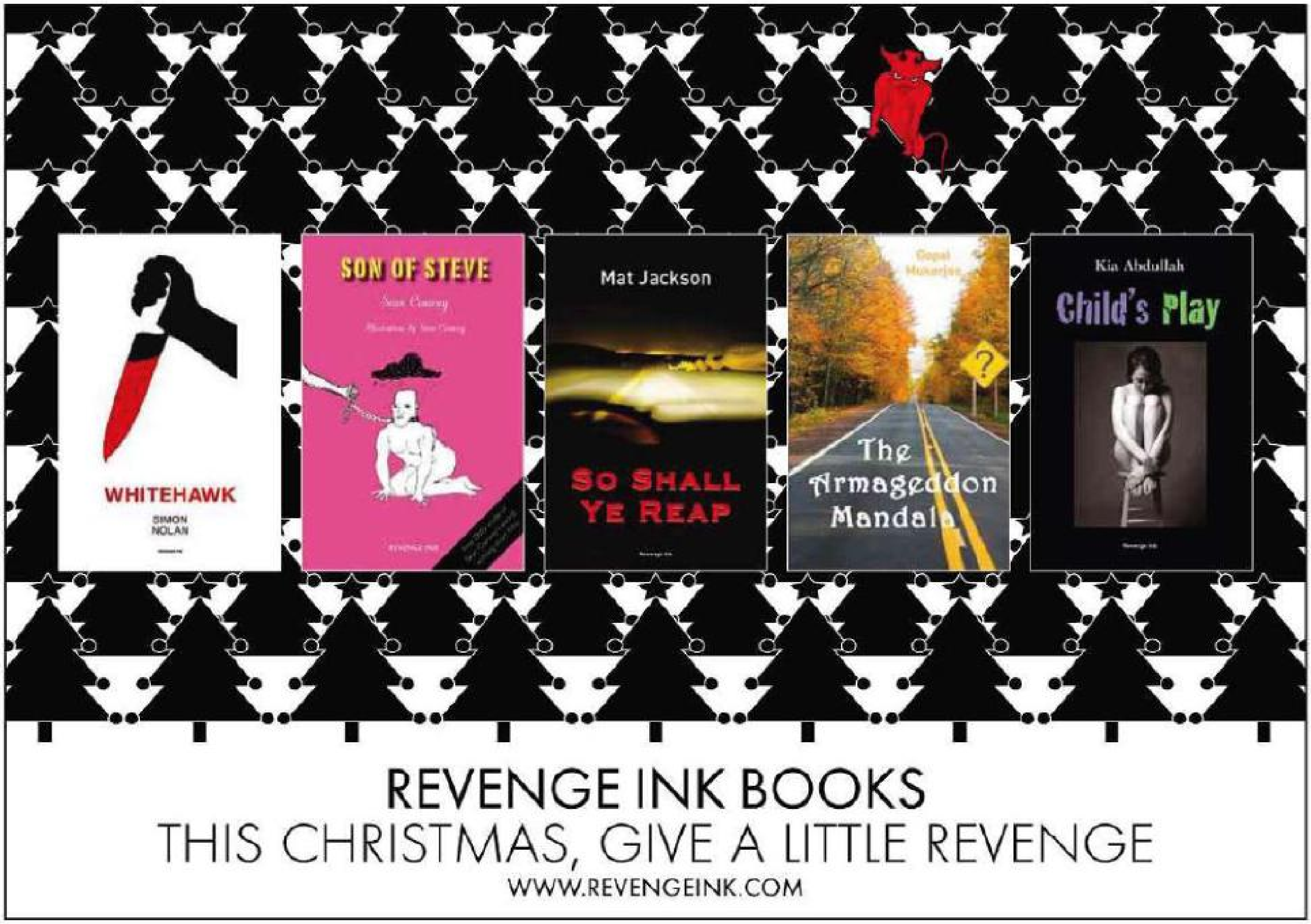
But mostly, it's just a good laugh. Four times a year these LARPers brave the elements at The Gathering to get their outdoor role-playing battle fix. And to party like it's 1099 – LARPers won't do anything unless it's accompanied with a gulp of ale, a sup of mead or a swig of single malt. They're nothing weirder than a bunch of geeks who like hanging out together in character.

"We reminisce about the experiences we've shared here years later around the fire or down the pub," says Lex Head, who plays fellow clansman Willum McCaullich. "It's great to be able to say 'I was there.'"

For more, visit Lorientrust.com and Bearsfaction.org.uk

See more pics at Bizarremag.com

Sebastian the crab, before he met little mermaid Ariel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THE GEEK ISSUE

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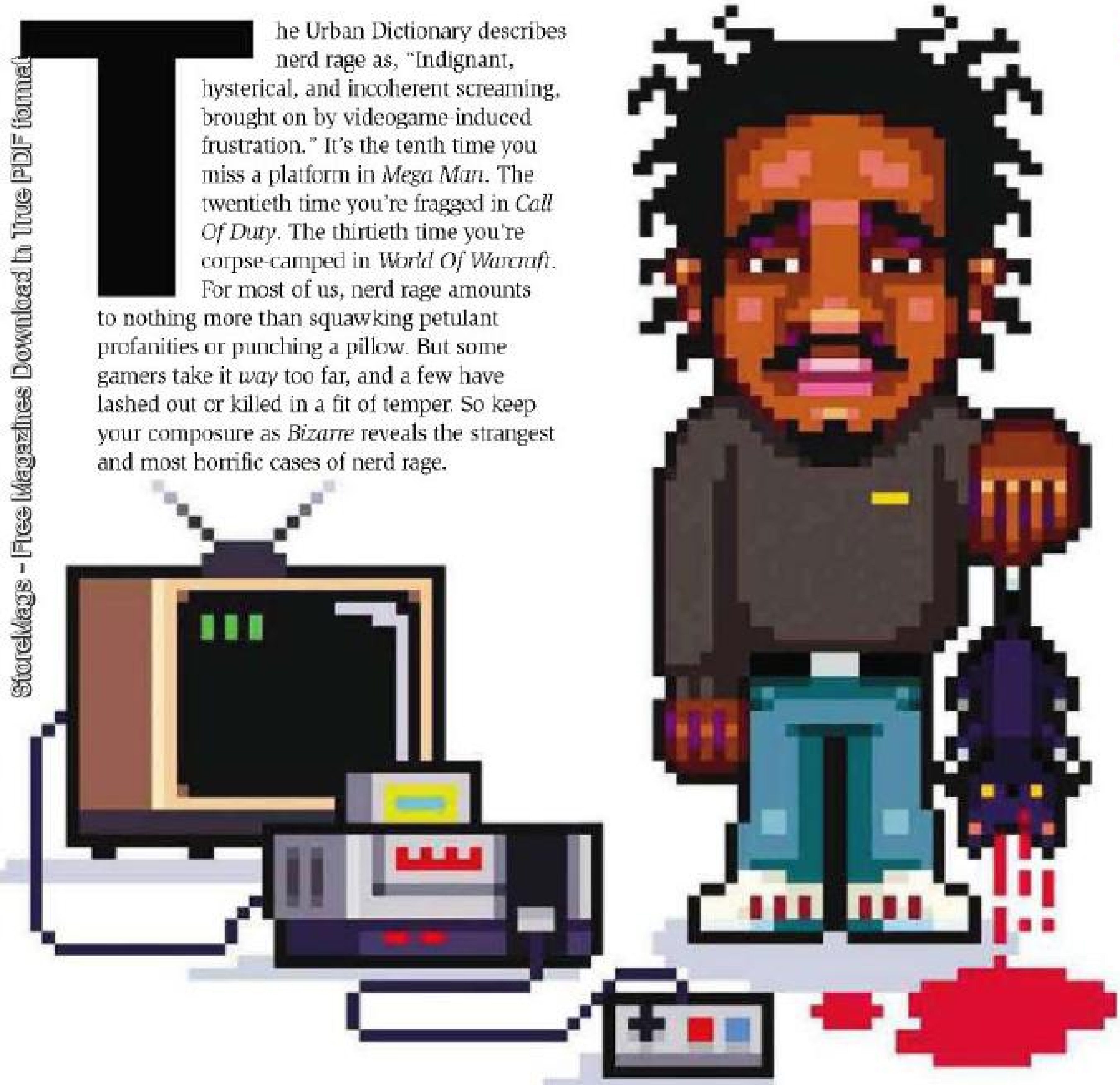
NERD RAGE

>WORDS WESLEY YIN-POOLE
>ARTWORK ARMY OF TROLLS

*** GAME OVER! ***

Prise your eyes away from the flat screen, smash down your stick of joy and delve into the dark world of extreme nerd rage, where gaming addicts maim and kill

The Urban Dictionary describes nerd rage as, "Indignant, hysterical, and incoherent screaming, brought on by videogame-induced frustration." It's the tenth time you miss a platform in *Mega Man*. The twentieth time you're fragged in *Call Of Duty*. The thirtieth time you're corpse-camped in *World Of Warcraft*. For most of us, nerd rage amounts to nothing more than squawking petulant profanities or punching a pillow. But some gamers take it *way* too far, and a few have lashed out or killed in a fit of temper. So keep your composure as *Bizarre* reveals the strangest and most horrific cases of nerd rage.



CAT SPLAT

In June last year, 21-year-old Bruce Jamar Walston, from Virginia, stunned his girlfriend and her kids when he grabbed their kitten and hurled it at the wall of their flat, after it accidentally unplugged Bruce's games console.

The rest of the family watched in horror as the kitten died on impact, and landed in a crumpled heap on the floor. Bruce's partner immediately called the police, saying he'd become "enraged", and they arrested Bruce, charging him with disorderly conduct and class one misdemeanor, the highest penalty for a first-time animal cruelty offence in the state of Virginia.

It was a shocking incident, but Bruce's girlfriend should've seen it coming. Five months before Bruce killed the family kitty, he'd beaten up a 36-year-old man with... wait for it, a vacuum cleaner. We wonder which game he was playing. Hopefully it wasn't *Nintendogs*. →

BLAZING FURY

Florida. Idyllic, warm and family-friendly. Not according to 15-year-old Michael Brewer. While he was sitting by a pool at Deerfield Beach, in October 2009, his schoolmate Matthew Bent and four others doused him in the type of alcohol that surgeons use to clean their hands, then set him ablaze. Michael jumped into the pool, but it was too late – nearly two-thirds of his body had been burned and he was hospitalised for five months. "I had holes in my arms," Michael later recalled.

Michael was attacked after Bent gave him *The Little Mermaid* videogame, which he was expected to pay $40 (£25) for, but didn't. Some of the teens laughed about what they'd done afterwards, but two of them were charged with attempted second degree murder and are still being held in prison. The case hasn't gone to trial yet.

"Some of the teens laughed after they set Michael on fire"

"James started choking his mum, saying he wanted to kill her"

JUNKIE EPPY

The massively multiplayer online role-playing game *World Of Warcraft* is horribly addictive, but in February last year, 27-year-old James Swan, from Florida, got abnormally carried away.

When his 50-year-old mum asked him to stop playing so that the family – including five children – could sleep, James, who'd been drinking, grabbed her by her hair and threw her on to a bed, then tossed his own son across the room. When his mum ran into the kitchen to call the police, James ripped the phone off of the wall, then rammed his head into the plaster. After chasing his mum into the living room, James started choking her, saying he was going to kill her. To stop him, James' granddad reached for a handgun and shot him. The bullet bounced off James' skull and shattered the living room window, just as his mum was starting to black out. James and his mum survived.

FIFA AXE MASSACRE

When 17-year-old shop-fitter James Callaghan lost three consecutive games of *FIFA 2008* against his younger brother, he went on a murderous rampage through the streets of Hull, wielding an axe and a knife. After downing a bottle of vodka, the diagnosed schizophrenic threatened two girls, struck a passer-by on the head with the axe, terrified a cyclist, and tried to smash his way into a couple's flat. But his most brutal act of violence was against 65-year-old Irene Robertson. After forcing his way into her home, he struck her six times on the head with his axe, chopped off one of her fingers and repeatedly stabbed her in the back, stomach and leg, killing her. James wrote a message to his mother in lipstick on the walls of Irene's flat and a mirror, saying he was sorry and hadn't intended to kill an old woman. He's now in a high-security hospital.

A TEST OF STRENGTH

Test Your Strength arcade machines are designed to be punched – that's what the punching bags they come with are for. But 30-year-old Dustin Gooden, from Idaho, doesn't play by the rules when he's had a few bevvies too many. In June, the 6ft 5in, 18 stone bruiser caused $3,000 (£1,900) worth of damage when he swung at every part of one of those machines, except the bag. At 2am, with a gut-full of booze, Dustin smashed the screen of the coin-operated game at a bar in Boise, cutting his thumb. He was charged with malicious injury to property and could be sentenced to up to five years in prison, but in his defence, Dustin could argue that the game asked for it.

> "Dustin smashed the screen of the bar game"

TEST YOUR STRENTH
STRENGTH

COUNTER STRIKE

STABBING'S CHEATING

In videogames, extra lives and endless respawning means death isn't the end. But in March last year, a 17-year-old gamer in Jilin Province, China, seemed to use a real-life 1UP when he survived being stabbed in the head by a 10in rusty knife.

A group of lads, who were playing *Counter-Strike* at an internet café, accused the boy of using a cheat that allows gamers to see through walls. A fight broke out outside the café and the teenager was stabbed in the left temple.

The blade went through his head and was millimetres away from coming out of the other side, but the boy remained conscious. After he was rushed to hospital, the knife was removed in a gruelling, 10-hour operation. Amazingly, the blade had missed his major arteries, and even though the weapon had cut through the area of his brain that controls motor function, his coordination wasn't affected. →

WII TANTRUM

When 26-year-old James Williams, from Colorado, got into a fight over an unknown Wii game last May, he bit his mother on the ankle before embarking on a bizarre crime spree.

James got into his car and drove around the Meadows Mobile Home Park where he lived, ramming into other vehicles. He also hit a pedestrian and a tree, and when some of the people who live in the park followed James and confronted him, he got out of his car and fired a BB gun at the rear window of another vehicle.

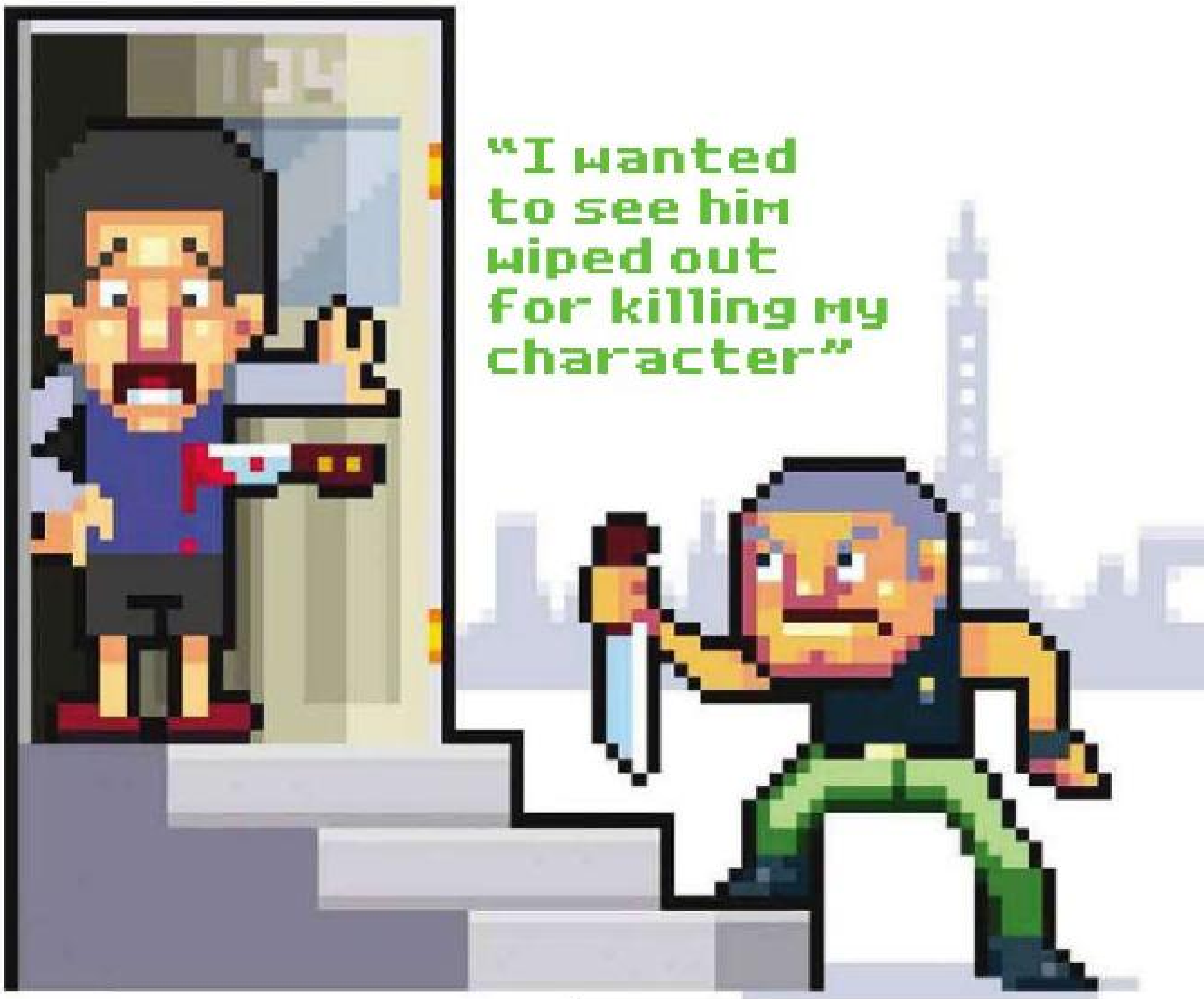
A police car eventually turned up to restore order, but James rammed into that, too. That, you'd imagine, would be that. Oh no. Determined to dig himself into an even deeper hole of embarrassment, Williams jumped on to the bonnet of the cop car and was tasered, then arrested.

KNIFE-STRIKE 2

Last year, 20-year-old Frenchman Julien Barreaux got real-life revenge for a virtual defeat when he stabbed a man who'd beaten him in a *Counter-Strike* knife fight.

Julien spent seven months plotting his revenge and tracking down his victim, known only as Mikhael. In November, he knocked on Mikael's front door, then plunged a kitchen knife into his rival's chest, missing his heart by an inch. After Julien had been arrested, he told police he had wanted Mikael to be "wiped out" for killing off his character.

Julien was sentenced to two years behind bars and ordered to undergo psychiatric tests and anger management therapy. At a court in Cambrai, northern France, judge Alexiane Potel told Julien, "You are a menace to society. I am frankly terrified of the disproportionate reaction you could have if someone looked at you the wrong way in the street."



> "I wanted to see him wiped out for killing my character"

GAME OVER!

In 2007, 21-year-old student Jonquel Brooks shot four men who'd turned up at his flat in Fresno, California and accused him of stealing a PlayStation 2.

One of his victims died and, after the shooting, Jonquel fled his apartment, then called his mother, saying he wanted to negotiate with the police. Jonquel agreed to turn himself in, but when he didn't show, the police tracked him down to a flat eight miles from the murder scene.

Jonquel eventually surrendered, but the police didn't find the console in his apartment. The student, who wanted to work as a parole officer when he graduated, claimed he'd shot the men in self-defence, but in 2009 he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison. One of the wounded men, 22-year-old Drew Pfeiff, told police, "People don't deserve to die for stupid stuff like this."

ADDICTION'S MURDER

In January 2010, 15-year-old Romanian *Counter-Strike* obsessive Ionut Silviu Savin stabbed his step-mother 17 times after she stopped paying for his internet connection (we're sensing a pattern here). He then grabbed all of the money in the house, dumped the murder weapon in the bin, and went to an internet café to continue playing the game.

The woman's body was discovered by her husband when he returned home from work. He called the police, but Ionut turned himself in before they had traced his whereabouts, calmly saying, "I think I'm the one you're looking for."

Before murdering his stepmother, the teenager had played truant from school 200 times to fuel his gaming addiction. Ionut is currently under guard at a psychiatric clinic. If he's found guilty of murder he faces 12 years in prison.

Die By The E-sword

The Chinese nerd rage killer who prompted virtual property laws

World Of Warcraft players are flogging their pixelated weapons on eBay for silly money, and virtual economies have quickly become intrinsically linked to money in the real world. But the concept of legally owning something virtual was alien until 2005, when a nerd rage killer in China grabbed the headlines.

That year, 41-year old Qiu Chengwei stabbed a man to death for selling his virtual sword for 7,200 Yuan (£470). Qiu had lent his online chum the dragon sabre, which he'd won in *Legend Of Mir 3*, but when he asked for it back, his friend said he'd sold it.

This case led to a debate in China about where the law on virtual property stood. Some called for such weapons to be classed as private property because players invest time and money in them, but lawyers argued virtual items could not be owned. The debate wasn't resolved, but it flagged up the problem.

In November 2007, Dutch police charged five teenagers with virtual theft of furniture from rooms in social networking website Habbo Hotel, in what's considered the world's first arrests for virtual theft.

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Gaiman reclines
with his harem

American GOD

We ride with **Neil Gaiman** to the fan-tastical house that inspired his divine novel

WORDS **DENISE STANBOROUGH**
PHOTOS **NEVILLE ELDER**

Deep within a dense forest in the arse-end of Wisconsin, USA, sits a sprawling, weird, roadside tourist attraction, perched on a mound of stone. As *Bizarre* enters through the visitor centre and walks past the ticket desk, there's no whiff of the insanity that lies beyond. But walking deep into the bowls of the resort, we discover an endless maze of madness, like a bric-a-brac shop in Michael Jackson's Neverland. We're at House On The Rock to meet sci-fi and fantasy writer, Neil Gaiman.

House of worship

This highly unlikely place in a small village in Sauk County captured Gaiman's imagination during his first visit in the early 1990s, and he implanted it in his award-winning 2001 novel, *American Gods*. The House On The Rock was built by eccentric architect Alex Jordan, who erected a Japanese-style dwelling on top of 'Deer Shelter Rock', just to see if he could. After popping a picnic table outside, the building became a simple tourist spot and, gradually, Jordan started to fill the house with antique vases, Japanese trinkets and an orchestra of instruments that appeared to play on their own. When he extended the place and added more rooms, he stuffed in even more unusual wonders, including a steam train and the world's largest carousel. Now, the House On The Rock is such an incomprehensible hotchpotch that Gaiman had to tone down his descriptions of it in *American Gods* to make it more believable.

This way for a Gaiman sensation

The House on the Rock

Gaiman's not here on a sentimental visit, though. After realising that an increasing number of folk with unusual hair colours and alternative clothes were turning up at the house clutching battered copies of *American Gods*, the owners of House On The Rock invited Gaiman and his fans to their attraction for a special event to pay homage the author, his book, and the place that inspired it. →

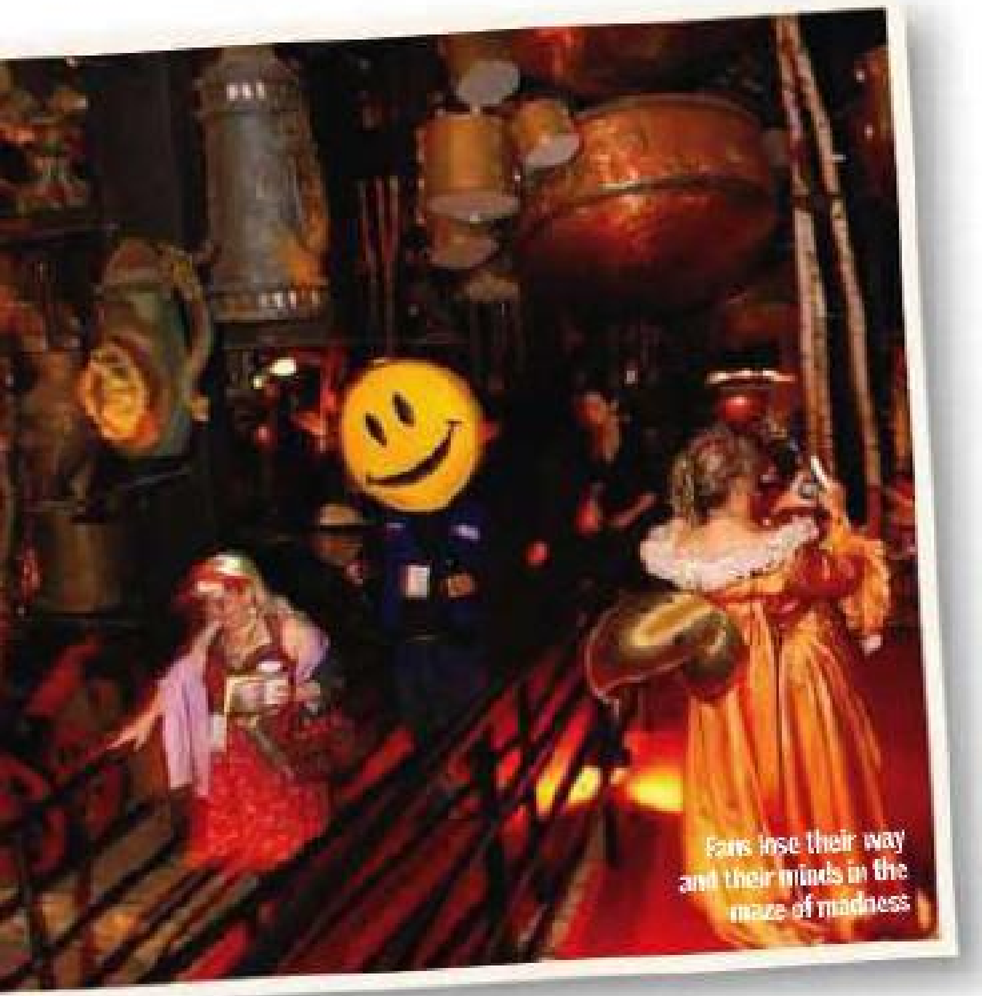
A ghoulish walkabout performer works fans into a frenzy

The world's largest and most majestic carousel at House On The Rock

"My initial reaction to this place was delighted bafflement," Gaiman remembers, fondly. "What I loved most is that I couldn't tell why anybody was here. People came, paid a fair amount of money, walked around and left happy. It's almost like a religious experience."

We're sitting in the Alex Jordan Centre, the first stop on a tour dedicated to the architect of this wonderful, muddled project. Gaiman's typically dressed in black, sweeping his hand through his mop of floppy hair, waiting to greet an expectant army of his followers who are crammed into a massive tent outside. Soon, he'll go on stage and read them a passage from *American Gods* to sate their appetite, but for the next half an hour, he's ours.

Gaiman cops a feel of his divine mistress



Fans lose their way and their minds in the maze of madness

Pick your god

Earning cult status as soon as it was published, the novel explores what people choose to put their faith in. Old traditional gods slowly lose their power as people turn away from them, and are replaced by deities of transient things in society, such as celebrity, technology and money. "It's a metaphor for the way in which people come to America and give up their cultures," Gaiman explains. "Given that I wrote the book 10 years ago, I'm grateful that the character that portrays the god of the internet is still just about recognisable, but I feel sorry for the god of media. She's not what she once was."

As well as book signings, literary panels, talks, and presentations, the highlight of this weekend's line-up is the *American Gods* costume contest, judged by the writer. The prize is *very* special.

"The winners will be the first people ever to ride the World's Largest Carousel, so no pressure there then!" Gaiman laughs. "I'm wondering what sexual favours I'll accept as a bribe because I think my decision will come down to that."

The World's Largest Carousel resides within the bowels of House On The Rock, in a gigantic room filled with burning lights and blaring fairground music. Gaiman featured the ride in his book, and the main characters travel on it into the mind of Odin, a God from Norse mythology. The chance to be the first to go on the carousel is causing ripples of excitement among the fans.

The turn-out is impressive. Swarms of visitors – quaffing wine – are dressed as Egyptian gods, creatures from the underworld, and the dead. A few have even turned up as Gaiman, wearing dodgy wigs and replicas of his signature black leather coat. The book-signing queue is spilling out of the door, almost hitting the car park. "Most of my fans are incredibly loyal," says Gaiman. "Apart from a few, who think, 'We loved him when he was ours, and nobody knew about him, but now people know who he is.' Then they go and find someone they've never heard of. In truth, those people have my sympathy. I know I would never have picked up a Stephen King book if I hadn't started with *Salem's Lot* or *Carrie* in 1975, before he was the biggest thing in the world."

The wandering Time Lord

There's also curiosity and fear among Gaimanians today, as there are rumours that a film adaptation of *American Gods* is on the cards.

"I've already said, 'No' to a lot of Hollywood adaptations of *American Gods*," says Gaiman. "People want to make it into a film, but I don't

> "I looked at the dusty, steampunk things in **Doctor Who's TARDIS**, and had an urge to pop a widget in my coat"

Entering the magical mystery tour of Gaiman's mind

Which sexual favour will Gaiman accept for the top prize?

Stay Tuned! See *Bizarre* get lost in the incredible House On The Rock in a future issue!

know *how* it should be made. I grew tired of stories told in 124 pages, with beginnings, middles and ends in all the right places, so I wanted to write something that sprawls and goes wandering. I guess *American Gods* was a glorious 'fuck you' to Hollywood. But I have said, 'Yes' to someone who wants to make it into a TV series."

Television sits more easily with Gaiman and earlier in the year he got the chance to fulfil his dream of writing an episode of *Doctor Who*. "I've loved *Doctor Who* since I was three," he says. "Writing an episode was magic. Although, budget constraints meant a lot of re-writing and cutting out brilliant stuff because extra shoot days were too costly, which wasn't so fun. But I did get to wander around in Christopher Eccleston's TARDIS," he adds, grinning. "I looked at the dusty, brass, steampunk things in there, and had an urge to pop a little widget in my coat, except then I'd have a widget, completely devoid of context. I'd feel like an idiot, saying, 'Hey, see this little switch? It's from the TARDIS.'"

Whirlwind ride

If Gaiman had any more fingers in any more pies, he'd have trouble tying his shoelaces. Last year, he toured with his girlfriend, the punk-cabaret musician Amanda Palmer, wrote an *Anansi Boys* script for Warners, started creating a children's book, and entered discussions about the possibility of televising *The Sandman* comic.

A fan flies in for the event

Gaiman's next project will be a non-fiction book about the 1978 Japanese series, *Saiyuki*, better known as *Monkey* after it was dubbed into English and shown on the BBC from 1979-1980. "What fascinates me about the story behind Monkey is that it's true," says Gaiman. "In the seventh century, a monk called Xuanzang did travel from China all the way to India and bring back Buddhist texts. I love that. I also wanted to understand more about China, so it seemed like a good excuse to travel there and write about it."

Our time's suddenly up, and we leave the centre, discussing Gaiman's favourite *Doctor Who* actor, Patrick Troughton. Walking towards the large, circus-like tent, we can hear the buzz of the crowd and, without taking a breather from our interview, Gaiman walks into a sea of camera-flashes, clapping and cheering. *Bizarre* reluctantly hand him over to his adoring fans to let them meet their American God. →

For more, visit Neilgaiman.co.uk and Hotr.org.uk

Gods for a day

Gaiman thumbs Auntie Den's softback

Turn over to meet Gaiman's Geek Squad!

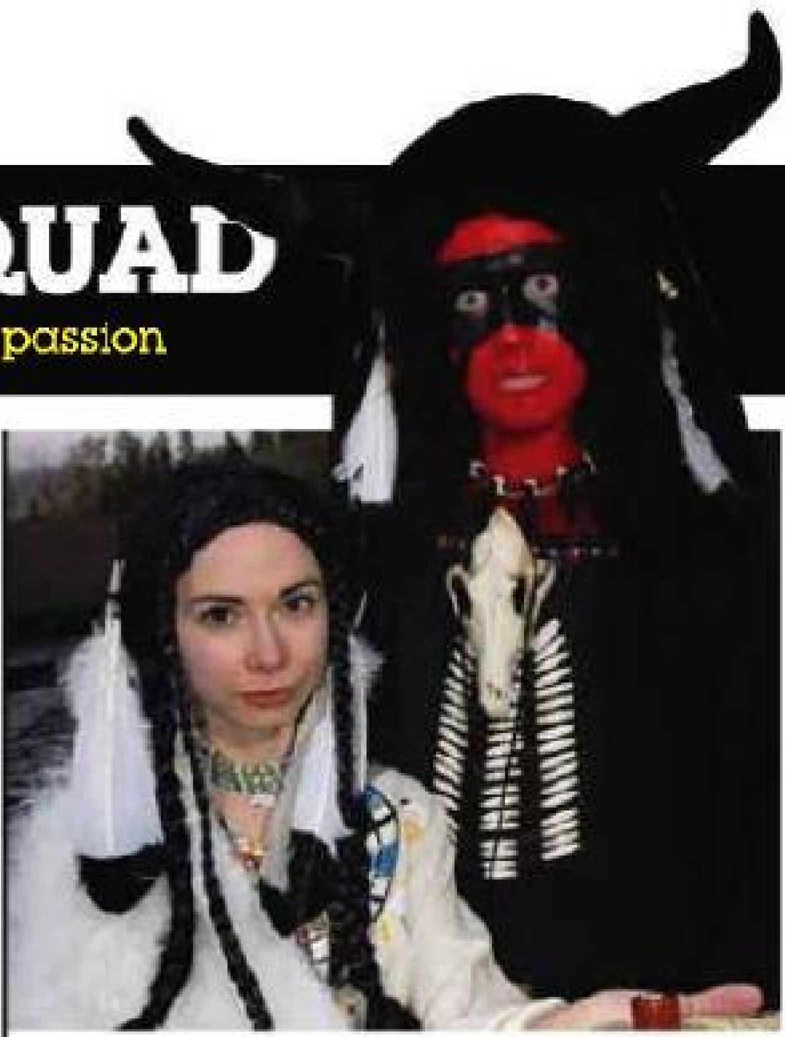
THE GEEK SQUAD

Meet Gaiman's dedicated followers of passion

Hey, you
ver wanted
to see
Lucy's tits?

ROBIN ELFANO
MADISON, WISCONSIN

"I'm God Of Media, represented at one point in the book as Lucille Ball from TV sitcom *I Love Lucy*. *American Gods* made me think about the fact that we dedicate so much time and money to the things that Gaiman calls 'gods'. Neil seemed to like my outfit, but I don't mind if I don't win the costume contest – at least I gave it my best shot!"



MATTHEW & TIFFANY FREDRICKSON
CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

Matthew "I'm the Native American Lacota god of evil, death and destruction, called Iya, and Tiffany is the white buffalo calf woman."

Tiffany "We're from South Dakota and one of the scenes in *American Gods* is set in a reservation there. Neil doesn't name it, but we know where it is."

JOSHUA
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

"I've come as Walmart, one of the new 'gods' of America. It's so big that the People Of Walmart website is a favourite with people who want to get married in one of the stores. I'm a big Gaiman fan and I've been into *Sandman* since the 1980s. I get easily star-struck, so after I walked up to him and said, 'Here's my book', I clammed up."

KALI
WISCONSIN

"I'm dressed as Kali, the Hindu Goddess of death and destruction of the ego. She's black-skinned and fierce. I figured, if I could get a ride on the carousel, I wanted to be painted black! *American Gods* is one of my favourite books, and I met Neil for the first time at the book signing. We had a little chat and had our picture taken. He's got a great accent!"

HANNAH AND HANNIBAL
ILLINOIS

Hannah "Everything Neil writes is magical, but his books are a bit like the House On The Rock; not everybody appreciates them. I went to hear him read *Coraline* at a book shop in Illinois. The House On The Rock is a perfect place to hold this event. There are so many cool people here and it's nice to meet fellow Neil Gaiman enthusiasts."

ANDY ROSEQUEST
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

"I got married last weekend, and I'm here with my wife on our honeymoon. We bought lottery tickets to win a ride on the carousel and our number came up, but my wife insisted I have it. I told a helper on the ride that I was newly married, and he let me go on the tiger eagle, which is ridden by one of the central characters in *American Gods*."

MADDIE WEBER
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN

"I'm fascinated by mythology and I knew a lot of the stories that the book references. I felt close to the character Shadow and I kept reading because I wanted to know what happened to him. Today, I'm dressed as the character Laura. I'm doing a degree in theatre, but doing my make-up so that I look partially dead was a challenge."

EMILY WELLY
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

"I've been a Neil Gaiman fan for years, and this is the fifth time I've seen him. Whenever he does a talk or a book reading, I'm there. My costume is based on the character Laura, who dies in a car accident, while giving a guy a blow job. Being surrounded by all of these weird things while Neil Gaiman celebrates this book is magical."

SUSAN SPAENBURG & TOM RUNNING
MADISON, WISCONSIN

Susan "When I opened the door to see the carousel for the first time, it knocked the wind out of me."

Tom "*American Gods* was my gateway to Gaiman. It's one of those rare books that you devour without putting down. Everyone here has entered into the right spirit. I'd love to go to this event every year." ●

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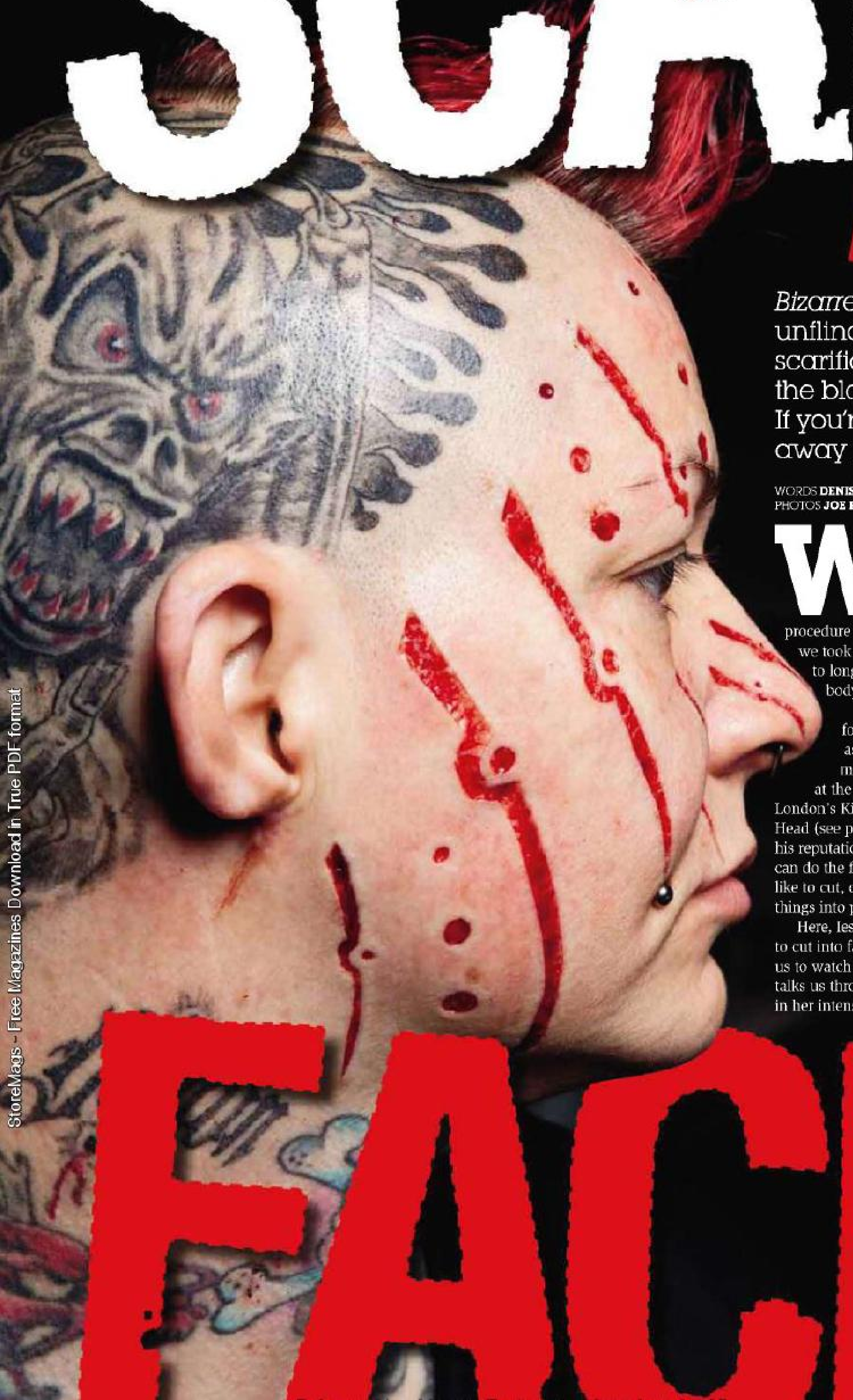
SCAR FACE



WARNING!
SCARIFICATION IS AN EXTREMELY DANGEROUS PROCEDURE, AND SHOULD ONLY BE ATTEMPTED BY A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL!

Bizarre takes an unflinching look at facial scarification from above the blade and under it. If you're squeamish, turn away now…

WORDS **DENISE STANBOROUGH**
PHOTOS **JOE PLIMMER**

We've featured facial scarification in *Bizarre* before, but had never seen it for ourselves. So when we got the chance to oversee the procedure and sit inches away from the scalpel, we took a big gulp and pulled up a pew next to long time body mod fan Angel Brady and body modder Iestyn 'The Absolute' Flye.

Iestyn has been modding in the UK for more than two years. Starting out as a body piercer, then progressing to more invasive mods, he's now working at the legendary Divine Canvas studio in London's King's Cross, run by tattooist Xed Le Head (see p105). In that time, Iestyn has solidified his reputation as a one of the few modders who can do the full gambit of procedures for folk who like to cut, chop, brand, stretch, split or implant things into parts of their anatomy.

Here, Iestyn tells *Bizarre* about how it feels to cut into facial flesh, while Angel kindly allows us to watch as she goes under the blade, and talks us through the most radical chapter yet in her intense modification story. →

IESTYN FLYE

The scarification expert cuts to the nitty gritty

“Facial scarification is one of my favourite mods to perform, so I was excited when Angel asked me to do her first one. Scarification is practiced by tribes, such as the Maasai in Africa. The Massai use it instead of tattoos, because ink doesn’t show up well on their skin. Certain facial scarification on men denotes their status within the tribe, children have scars to show which tribe they belong to, and women have it as a symbol of fertility.

“But although scarification has been slow to catch on in the West, more and more people know and understand what I do, and I’ve had more requests for facial work than ever before. Myself and the others at Divine Canvas already knew Angel, and she’s heavily modded, so I felt comfortable that she could take the scarification, both mentally and physically. This was the next step for her. I started by sketching out a pattern, which I then drew directly onto her face. We did a half-face design that incorporated scarring on the nose, and the sketch looked good.

“To cut Angel’s design, I made shallower incisions than I do for designs made up from straight lines. I pushed the scalpel about a millimetre and a half into her face, then ran it along the layer of connective tissue in the dermis to remove strips of skin. The process is intuitive and I mostly work by what feels right. I also used a biopsy punch, a round-shaped knife that I can adjust to make different-sized holes in the skin, to add interesting circles to the design.

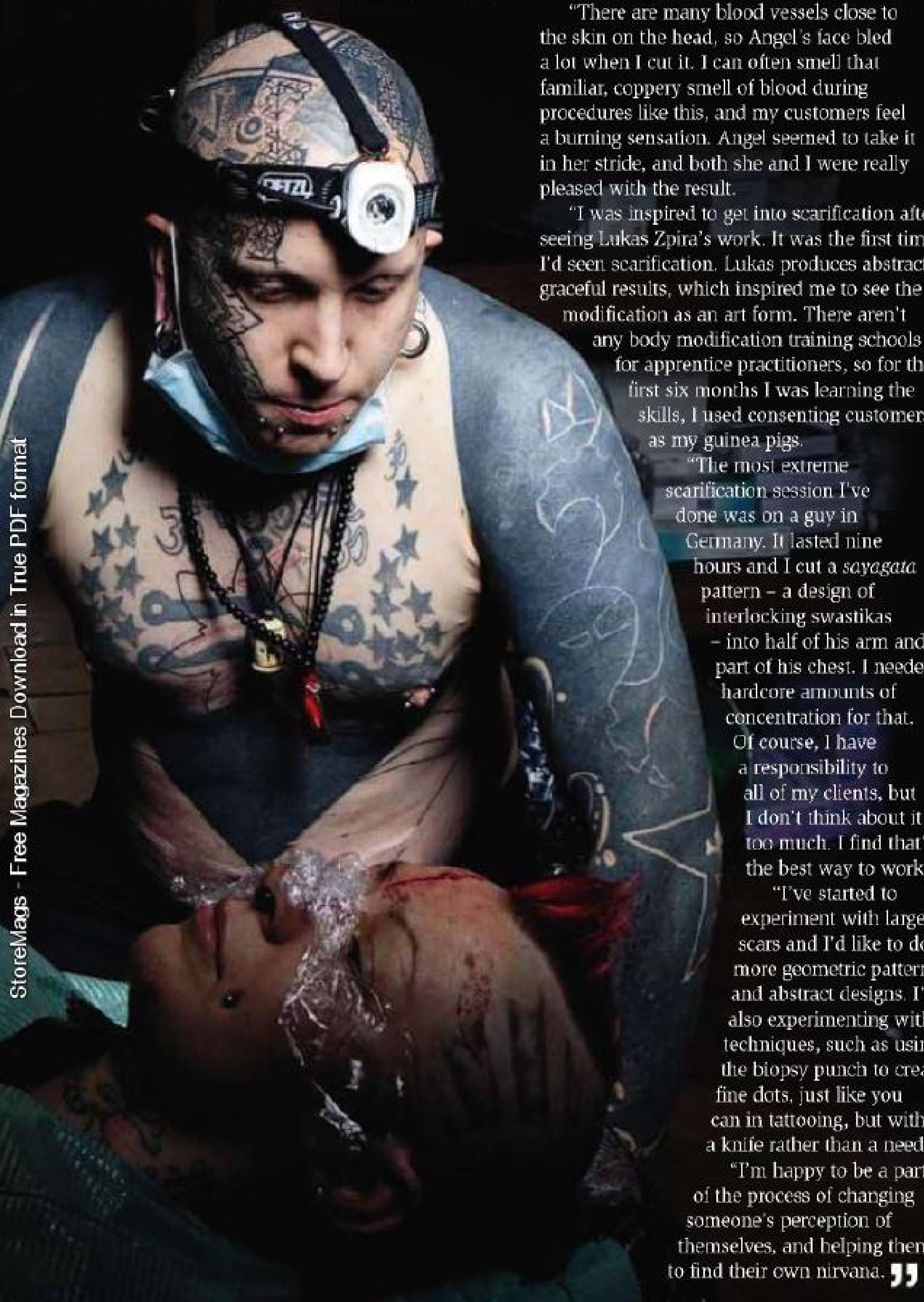
“There are many blood vessels close to the skin on the head, so Angel’s face bled a lot when I cut it. I can often smell that familiar, coppery smell of blood during procedures like this, and my customers feel a burning sensation. Angel seemed to take it in her stride, and both she and I were really pleased with the result.

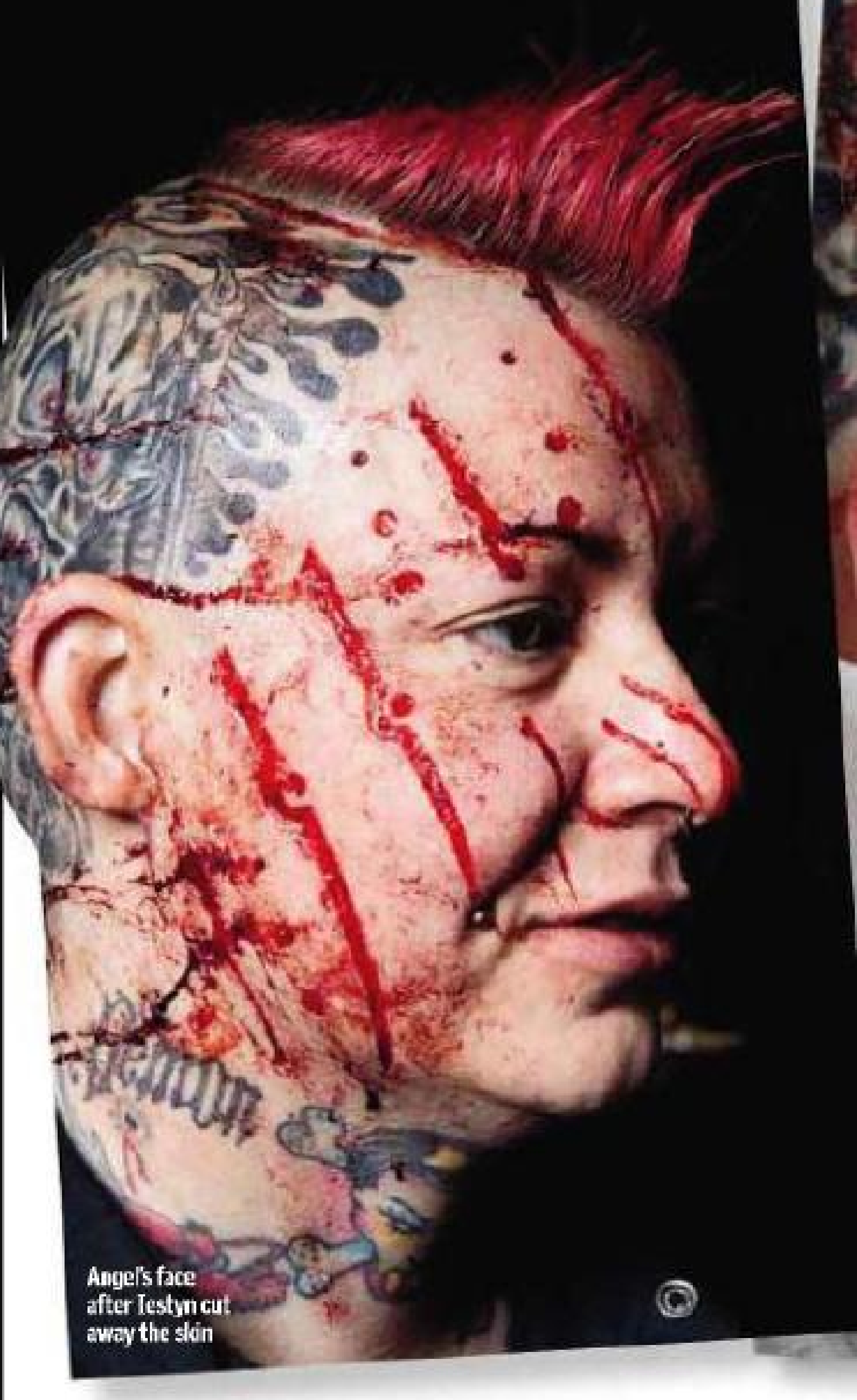
“I was inspired to get into scarification after seeing Lukas Zpira’s work. It was the first time I’d seen scarification. Lukas produces abstract, graceful results, which inspired me to see the modification as an art form. There aren’t any body modification training schools for apprentice practitioners, so for the first six months I was learning the skills, I used consenting customers as my guinea pigs.

“The most extreme scarification session I’ve done was on a guy in Germany. It lasted nine hours and I cut a *sayagata* pattern – a design of interlocking swastikas – into half of his arm and part of his chest. I needed hardcore amounts of concentration for that. Of course, I have a responsibility to all of my clients, but I don’t think about it too much. I find that’s the best way to work.

“I’ve started to experiment with larger scars and I’d like to do more geometric patterns and abstract designs. I’m also experimenting with techniques, such as using the biopsy punch to create fine dots, just like you can in tattooing, but with a knife rather than a needle.

“I’m happy to be a part of the process of changing someone’s perception of themselves, and helping them to find their own nirvana.”





Angel’s face after Iestyn cut away the skin

ANGEL BRADY

The brave body modder takes us on her journey

“I’ve had many body modifications. Around 18 months ago I had my tongue split, and I’ve also had my ear lobes removed and the tops of my ears pointed into a pixie shape, although they’ve since pinged out so I need to get them re-done. I first saw someone with facial scarification when I was having my tongue done, and wanted to know more about it.

“So far, I’ve split my body into two themes: my angel side and my demon side. All of the tattoos that I have represent that concept and I wanted my facial scarification to be on my demon side – the side that’s been

A piece of skin cut from Angel’s cheek

Iestyn cuts strips away from the dermis

around the longest. The more mods I get, the calmer my demon side becomes. I've found that modifications heal my soul.

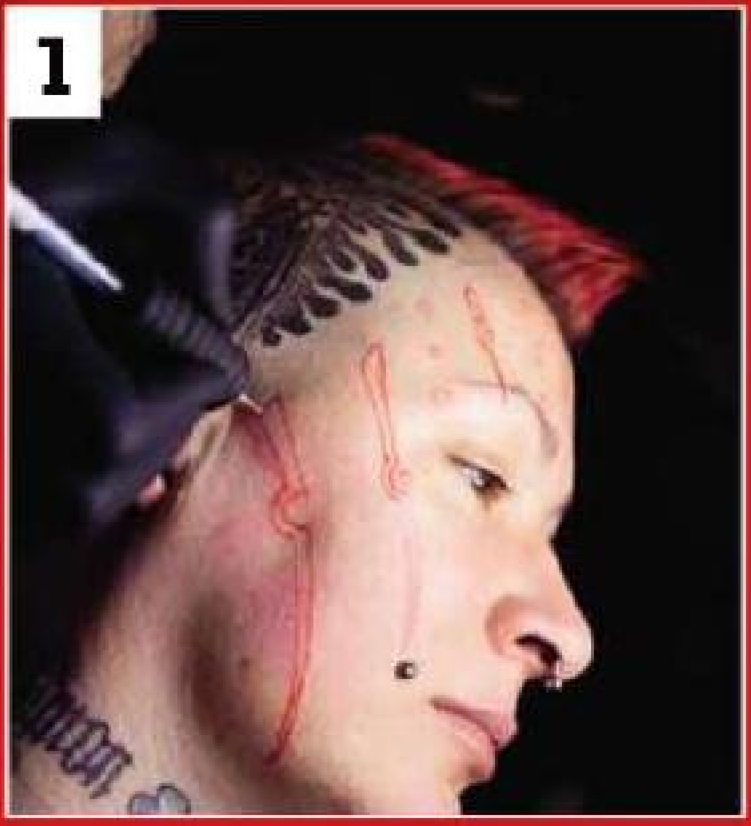
"When I approached Iestyn about doing something on my face, he suggested a tattoo on my chin, but I was worried that that in 10 years time it'd look like I had a blue beard, so scarification seemed like a better option. The design Iestyn came up with was nearly there, but when he drew it on to my face, the part near the hairline that joined the design together didn't work, so we removed it, and were both much happier. I'm vain and I didn't want a design that looked too harsh, because good-looking modifications are all about balance.

"During the process, I was aware of everything that was going on. I have a high pain threshold, but I could feel the skin being cut and pulled, and I knew when my skin was being put into the tweezers or clamps that Iestyn used to work on individual areas of my face. I enjoyed it! When I first saw the end result, I thought "Wow!" It was fantastic; exactly what I wanted. →

Angel closes her eyes as Iestyn cuts

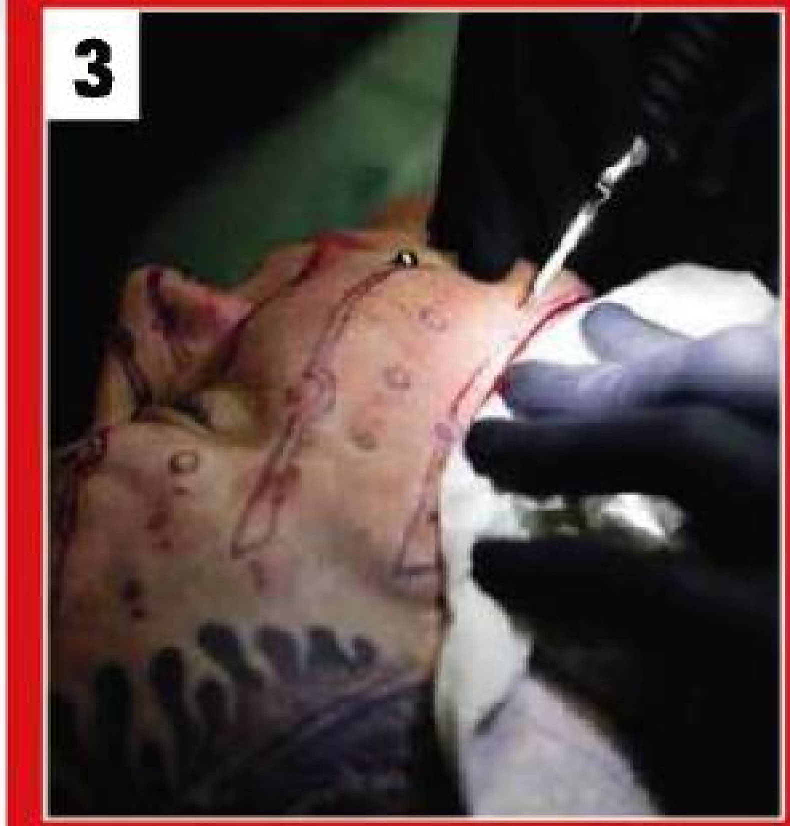
THE FIRST CUT IS THE DEEPEST...

A step-by-step guide to getting your face sliced

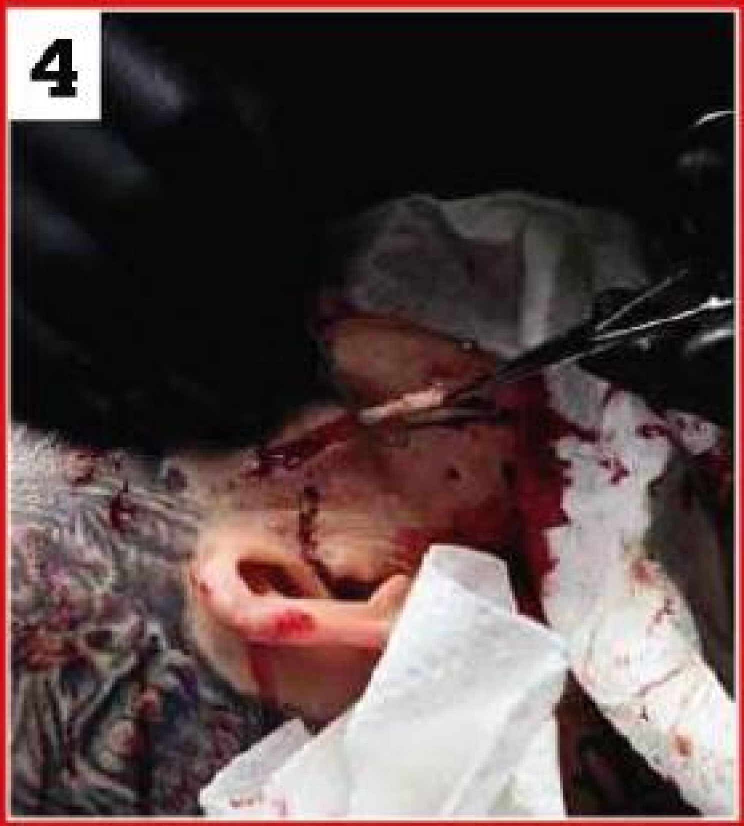


Iestyn draws the pattern onto Angel's face freehand, using a measuring tool to ensure the lines are evenly spaced.

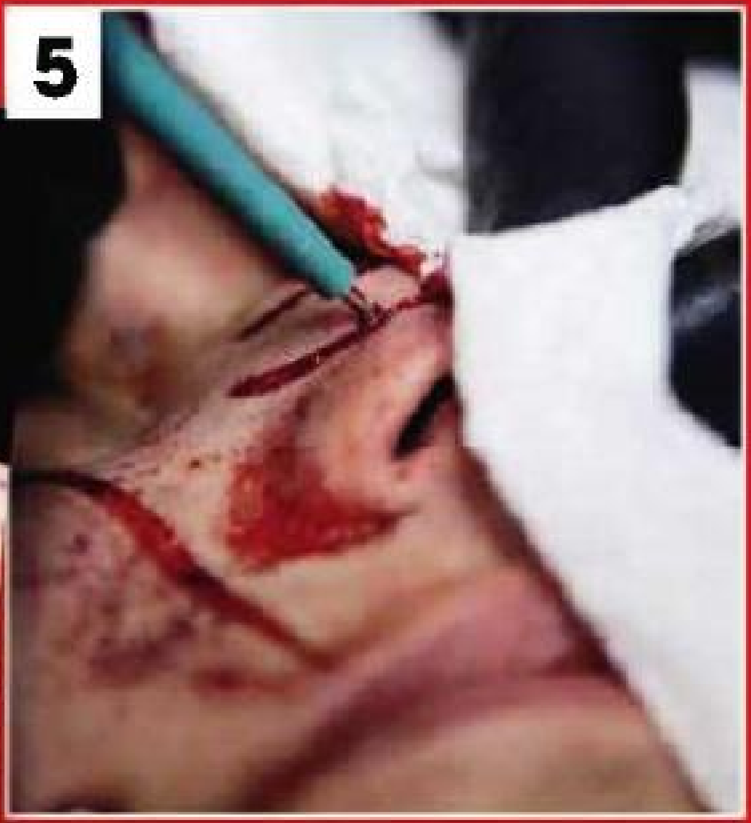
An anaesthetic gel is applied to Angel's face, then clingfilm is laid on top and left for 10 minutes. This traps in heat, making the gel work more effectively.



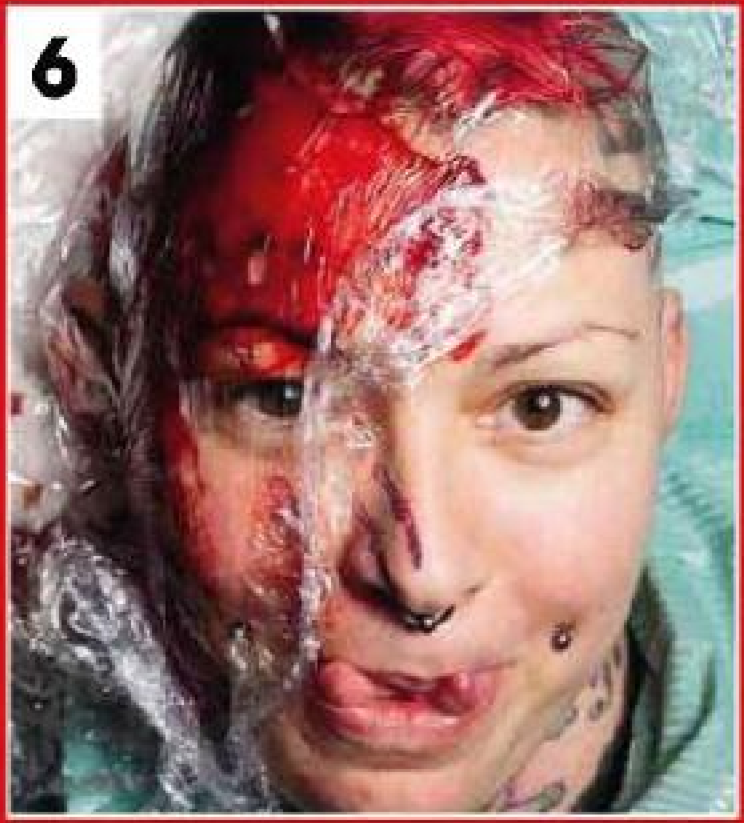
Once Angel is comfortable and ready to proceed, Iestyn runs the scalpel along the lines drawn on Angel's face. He only cuts down to the layer of connective tissue in the dermis.



Iestyn attaches clamps called hemostats to sections of Angel's skin. The clamps hold the skin in place and help to stem the blood flow, making it easier for Iestyn to slice her skin.



Iestyn lines up a dermal punch on the circle lines drawn on Angel's face, then presses it in to core out a perfect hole.



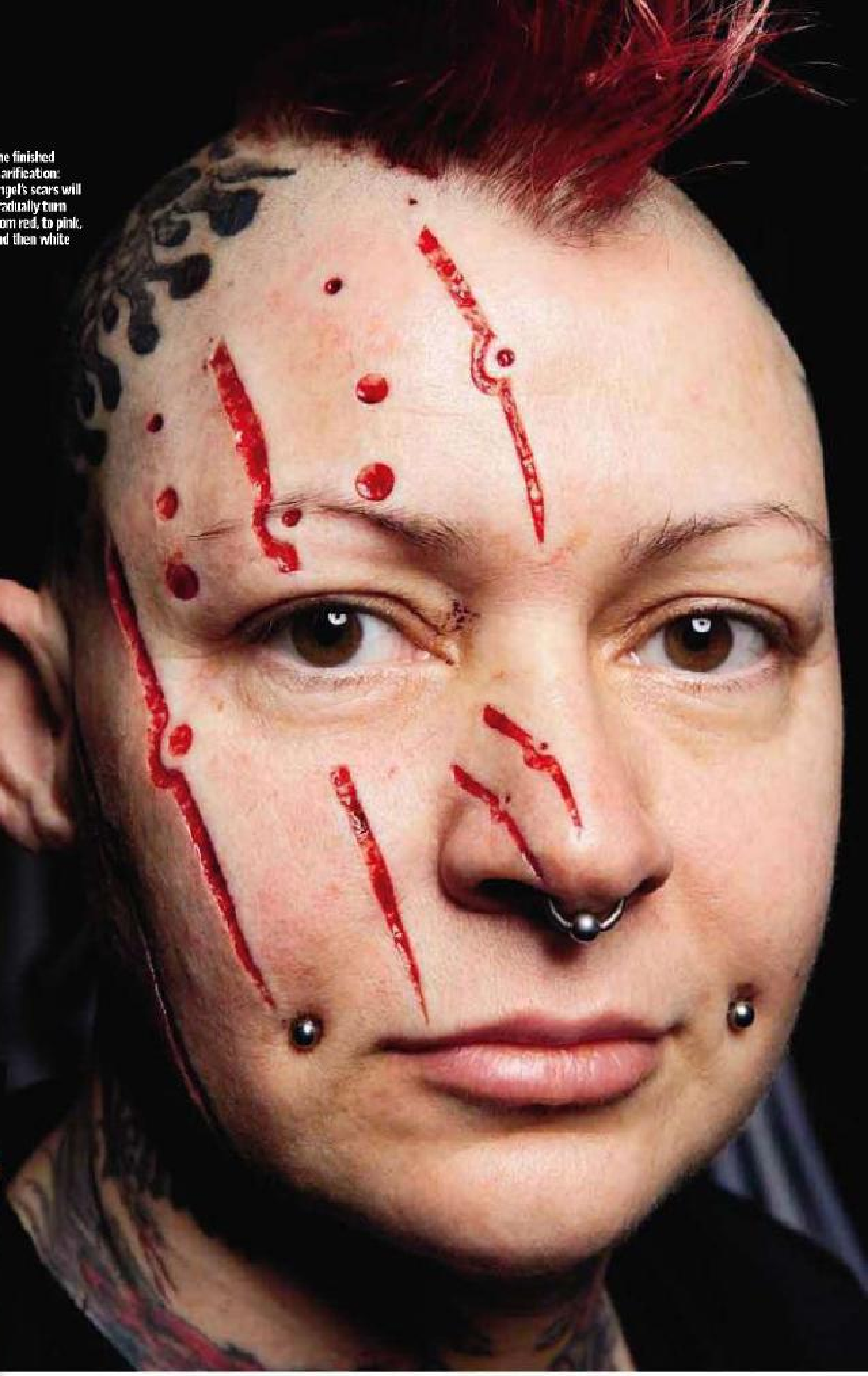
Angel's face is washed with tattoo green soap and water, then bandaged up to protect her open wounds and soak up her blood.

"I didn't feel the full effect of what I'd had done until the next morning. My face hurt, and I needed to soak off the bandages in order to carefully pull them away from the wounds. Next, I dried the wounds with a hairdryer to stop them from bleeding. For four days, I allowed scabs to develop on the cuts, but after that I had to endure the most painful part of the whole experience – I softened the scabs by running water over them in the shower, then scooped out each line and dot with cotton buds until the wounds looked like tunnels.

"Luckily, I haven't experienced any complications during the healing process. It's been eight weeks since the scarification was done and, while my face is a little itchy, I've stopped removing the scabs and the scars are gradually changing colour, from red to pink. Eventually they'll go white. I even went back to see Iestyn to have a bit more skin taken away from my chin! This modification is so full-on that I don't think I can be too fussy about the way it looks.

"Since having my scarification done, I've been asked if I've been attacked, or involved in a car accident, which makes me laugh. I told one nosey girl I'd been attacked by a bear and she believed me! Some people have even walked straight into me with their mouth's open, staring, but I don't mind it when folk gawp or ask questions, as long as they're polite.

"I would tell anyone who's considering this procedure, 'Think about it very, very carefully'. It's not as easy as getting a tattoo or a piercing. Do your research, and find a reputable body modification practitioner as there's no going back. It's definitely not for the faint-hearted. ”



The finished scarification: Angel's scars will gradually turn from red, to pink, and then white

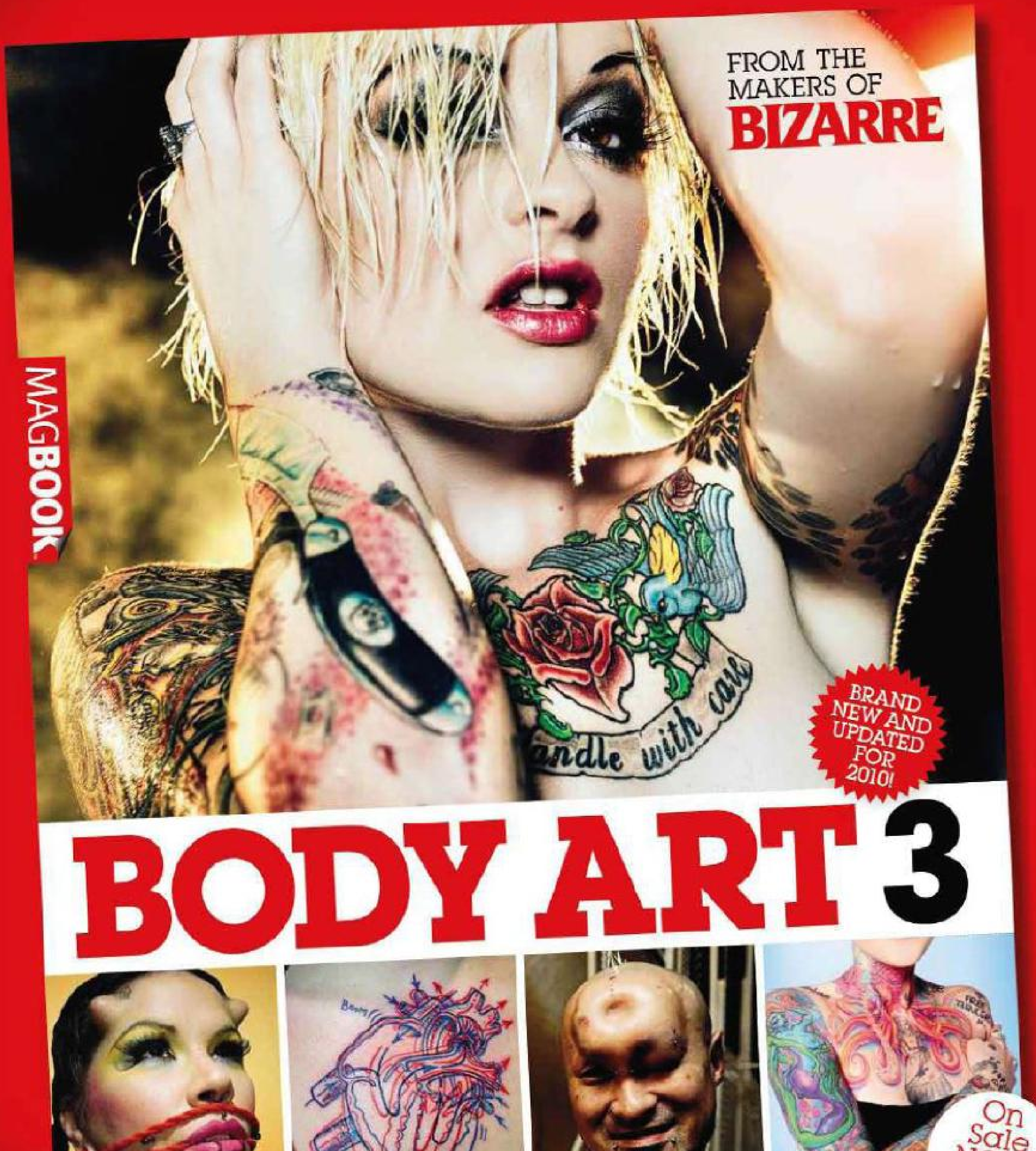
Pulling up the skin around the nose

AMAZING AFTERCARE

Iestyn's expert advice for helping the healing process

- The day after the scarification procedure, remove the bandages, wash the wounds, and use a hairdryer to heat up the skin. This dries the skin out and helps it to develop scabs that seal the wound.
- Let the area scab for three days, then soak it well and use cotton buds to take the scabs off. This will create an indent, and stop scabs from reforming.
- For the following three days, put Vaseline on the area, and then cover it in clingfilm to stop the wounds from healing (right).
- Remove the clingfilm on the fourth morning, and let it dry out. That evening, mix together a low percentage peroxide (no more than 3 per cent), stir in some sugar, and then use a sponge to rub the mixture into the scars to remove new scab re-growth. Wash the scars clean, dry them, and apply Vaseline before wrapping them in clingfilm again. Leave it on overnight, and repeat this process each day for the next two weeks.
- **Remember:** Never wash scarification with just regular soap and water. Soap can cause irritation and this can lead to infection. Eat well, look after yourself, and if you can relax during the healing process, that's even better.

A sizzling showcase of the world's most incredible ink and breathtaking body mods!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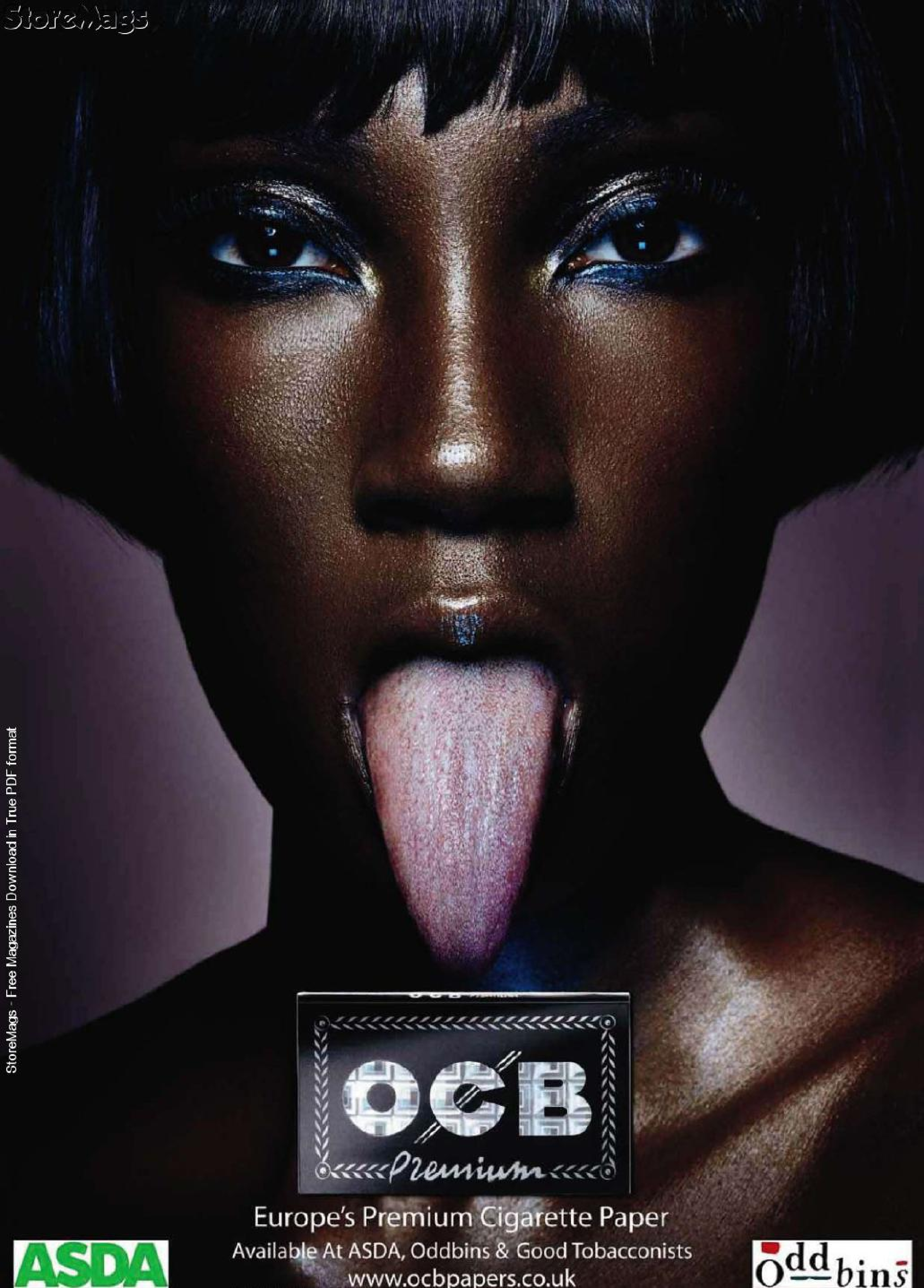
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No.4 Xed Le Head

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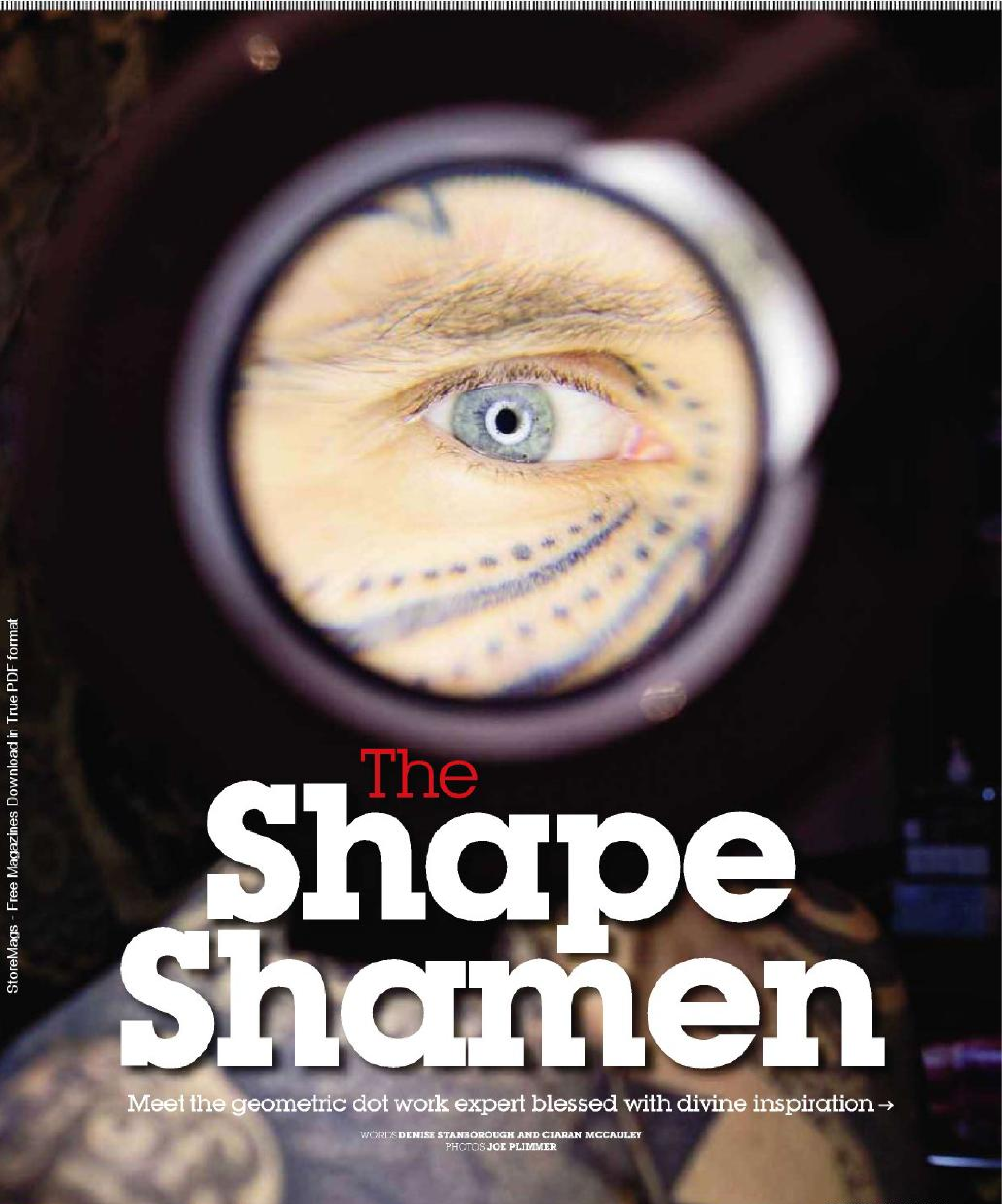


The Shape Shamen

Meet the geometric dot work expert blessed with divine inspiration →

WORDS **DENISE STANBOROUGH AND CIARAN MCCAULEY**
PHOTOS **JOE PLIMMER**

"When clients come to see me, they're entering Xed-time," says Xed Le Head, the geometrically obsessed genius and dot work tattoo trailblazer. "Don't have anything booked after an appointment with me because I can't be cajoled to starting before I want to. It's not unusual for my 12 o'clock appointment to begin at three or four."

Xed never rushes. He purposefully paces the studio of Divine Canvas, his north London shop, and takes considerable pauses before articulating his thoughts. For over 30 years, Xed has been marking skin with the surety of a Spirograph. He started out inking by hand when he was just 13 – tattooing himself and friends – but didn't progress into the industry full-time until he was 24. And even then he spent several nomadic years working in England and across Europe before he began working in studios. The man has taken time to learn the craft and, likewise, he takes his time when tattooing his meticulous designs.

But this laid-back attitude hasn't always ingratiated Xed to colleagues or clients. "I tell him to hurry up and get a fucking move on because there are other customers waiting," interjects fellow Divine Canvas inker 'Mad' Alan. "And Xed says: 'Shut up, I'm doing something, you donut!'"

Dot work doctor: Xed pores over some geometric designs

Joe inks a dastardly doppelgänger

"I'm trying to bring out a piece of your soul that displays who you are, and then add a piece of my soul to it"

Meanwhile Xed recalls almost being assaulted by customers – or "mad fucking drug dealer lunatic types", as he calls them – who got a little miffed with their tattoo's painfully slow process.

Performing geomet-tricks

But even Alan concedes that good things come to those who wait – and Xed produces amazing things. With working methods incorporating computer imaging and maths in the search for perfect symmetry, Xed is one of tattoo's geekiest exponents. He approaches appointments with methodical precision.

"Myself and the client will spend a lot of time talking about what they want to express," he says. "We look at some of my best work and they pick out their favourite pieces and we discuss what's good about them. Then we build a computer folder with pattern images. It might start out with 200 images, before being narrowed down to about a dozen."

After that, Xed will examine the client's body shape to decide how to place the tattoo. "There's maths involved, since every body is imperfect," he adds. "The body is not perfectly symmetrical and, when doing a back piece, for instance, you have to take into account the curvature of the spine. Plus there can be a discrepancy in skin surface from the spine to the armpit line of up to an inch and a half – which is a wanker if you're trying to do a symmetrical back piece, because you'll never get it to sit straight."

Talking to Xed can occasionally seem more akin to a casual chat with a mathematics professor or computer nerd. Yet despite such a technical process, Xed maintains his work is spontaneous. "I work organically. My style is about capturing a moment, and about feeling. And it's about the journey too – the end result is of great importance but the experience itself matters," he explains. "My aim is to make people more attractive, more sexy, than they perceive themselves. My work is tailored to individuals; I'm trying to bring out a piece of your soul that displays who you are, and then add a piece of my soul to it."

Xed's renowned style has allowed him to work on some well-known characters, including Lucky Diamond Rich. But despite the obvious respect he's attained for his talent, Xed remains uncomfortable when critiquing his own work. He admits to a lack of confidence, which culminated in "the worst black period" of his life.

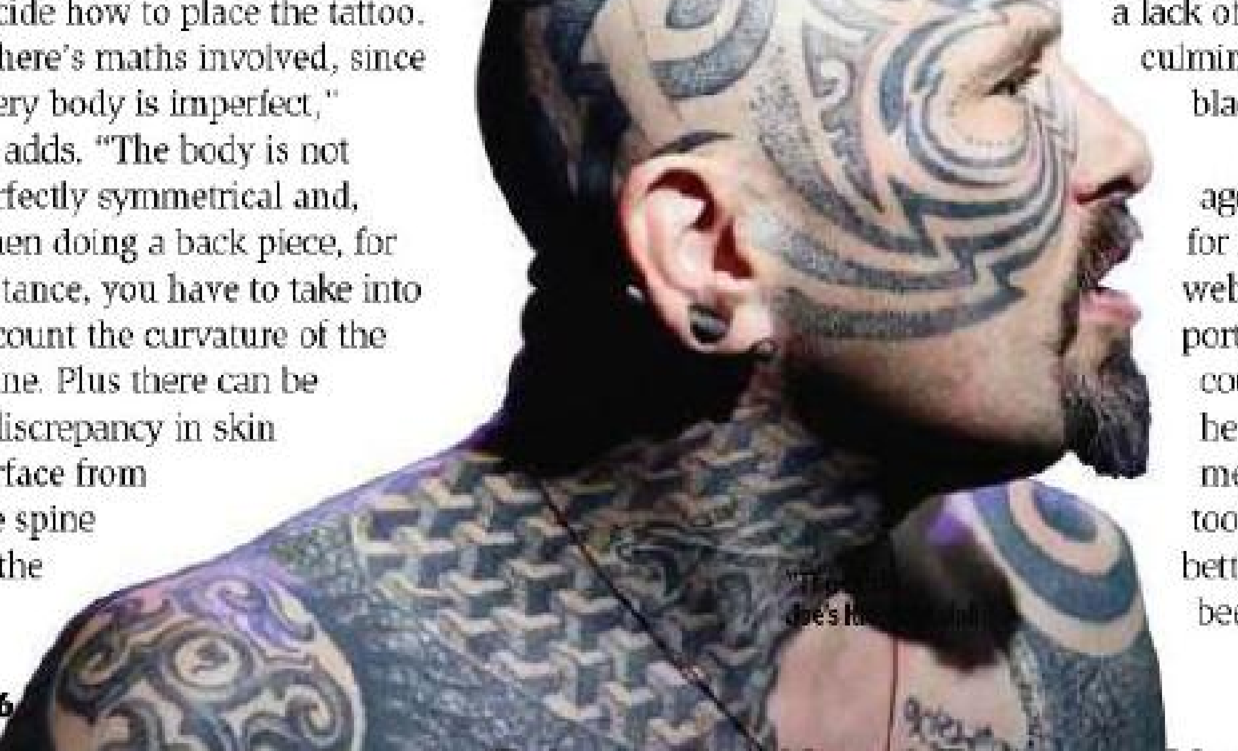
"About two years ago I stopped working for months, shut my website, and hid my portfolios so no-one could see them," he says. "Alan dragged me out of it. There was too much scrutiny. I'm better now than I've ever been at accepting it. It's a weird duality because I know I can talk to anyone about the technical process of dot work, but I still see myself as more of a thief than an artist. I'm always stealing stuff and trying to adjust it into my own. But then I've spoken to great artists, and they say all artists thieve."

Sacred art

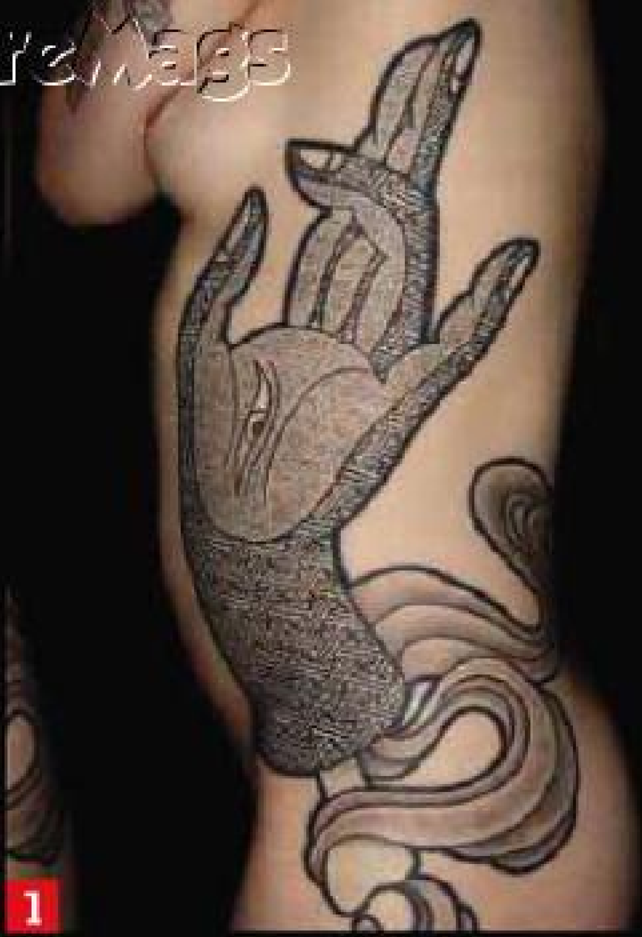
Interestingly, the technophile's reliance on geometry and pattern belies an appreciation for spiritual matters. He's fascinated by holy writing, in particular Tibetan calligraphy, and readily discusses a belief in otherworldly matters. "I'm increasingly drawn to trying to portray something divine in my work," he enthuses. "I like the phrase, 'Art without knowledge is empty.' So I've been drawn towards mantras and holy writings as tattoos. A conscious human being is the most sacred thing on earth. So using holy writings, the most sacred thing I can find, to decorate human beings, the most sacred thing I can see, is becoming a paramount part of my work."

In the past, his interest has also extended to experimenting with drugs during the creative process. "I've tattooed while on Ketamine," he muses. "But that was by request! And I know when my judgement is too impaired to tattoo. I don't smoke pot anymore because it prevents me from tattooing. But at the same time tattooing is about being creative, and most artists have created with the assistance of some substance or another."

Still, mischievous Xed isn't shy about exploring less worthy concepts. "I used to make obscure business cards that just had a mantra or a picture of a swastika on them," he says. "I've even got a business card that's a mandala (circular pattern) of my own penis. But they only go to girls." ●



"T[illegible] Joe's [illegible]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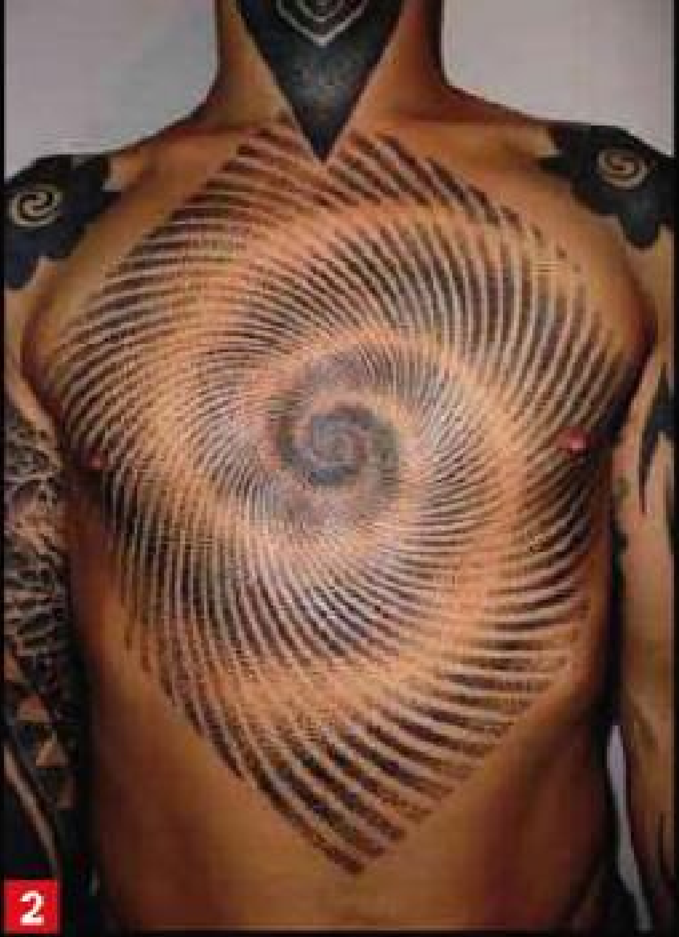
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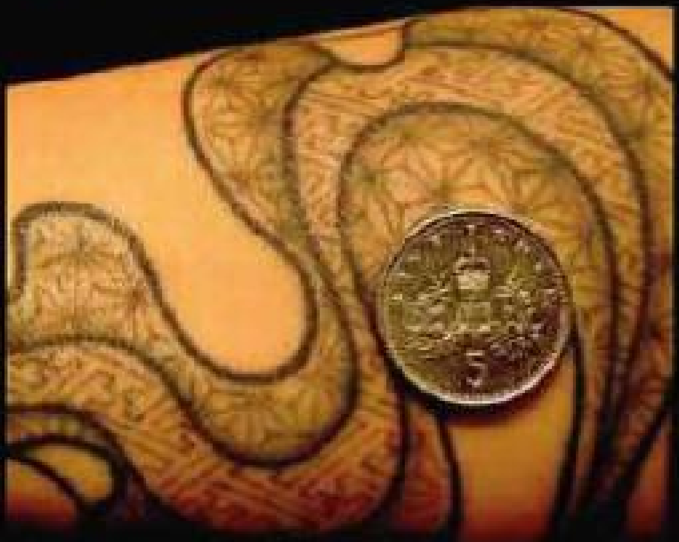
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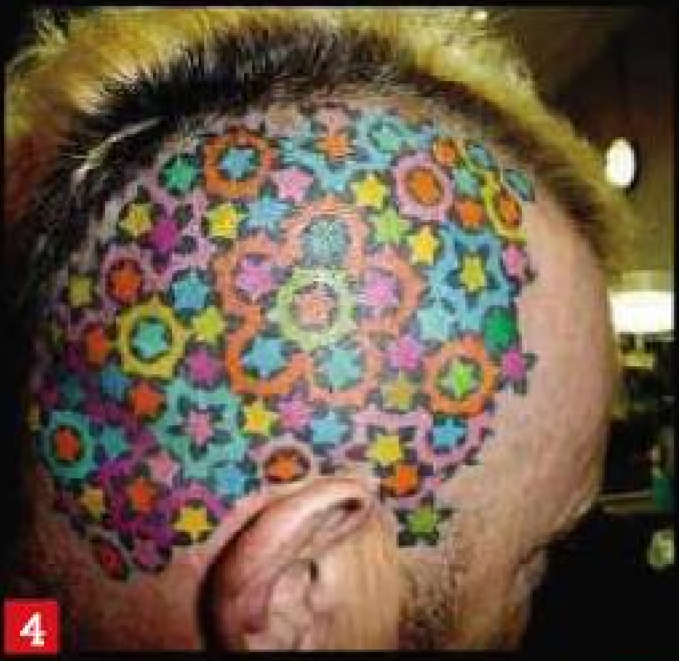
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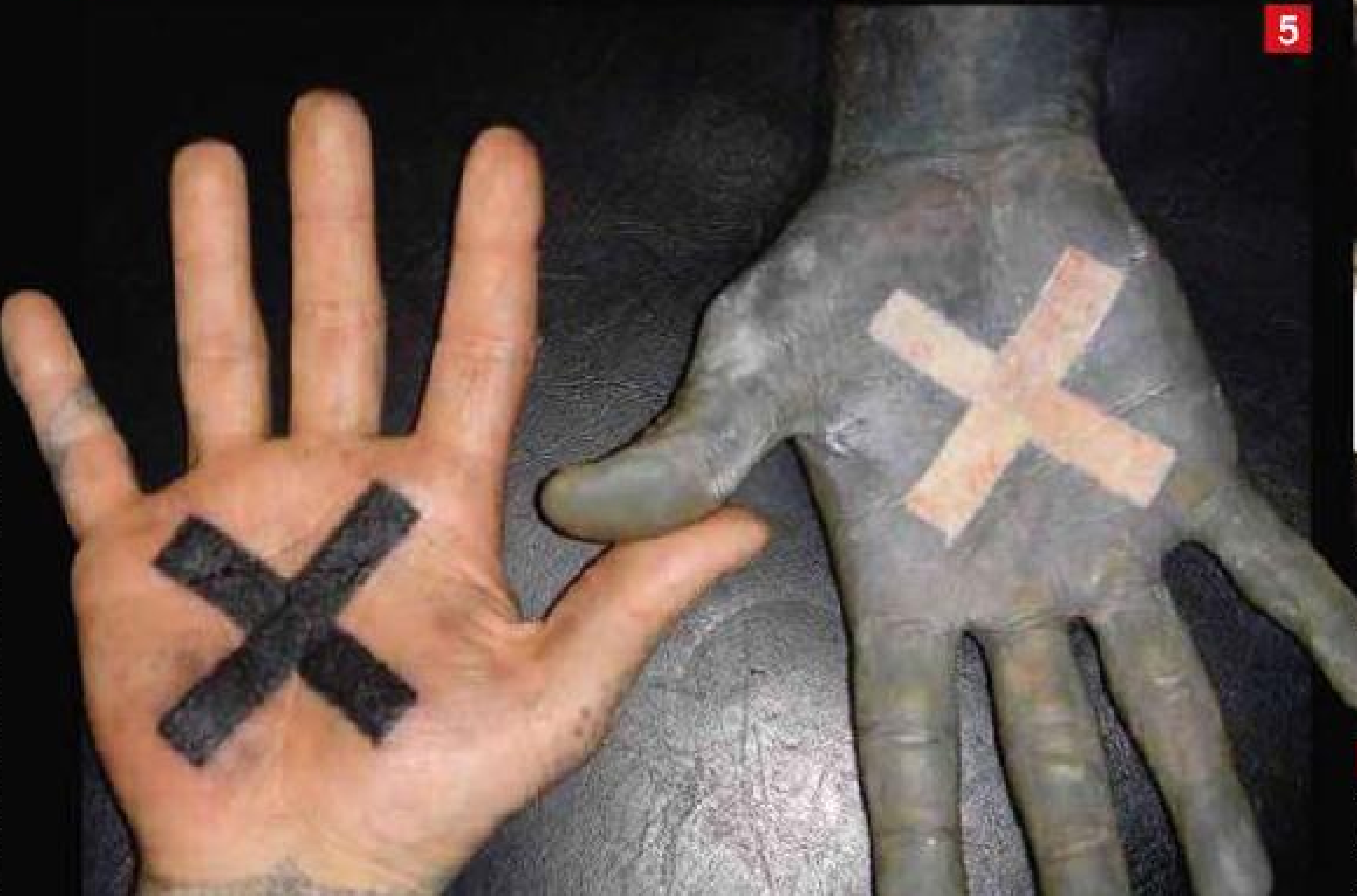
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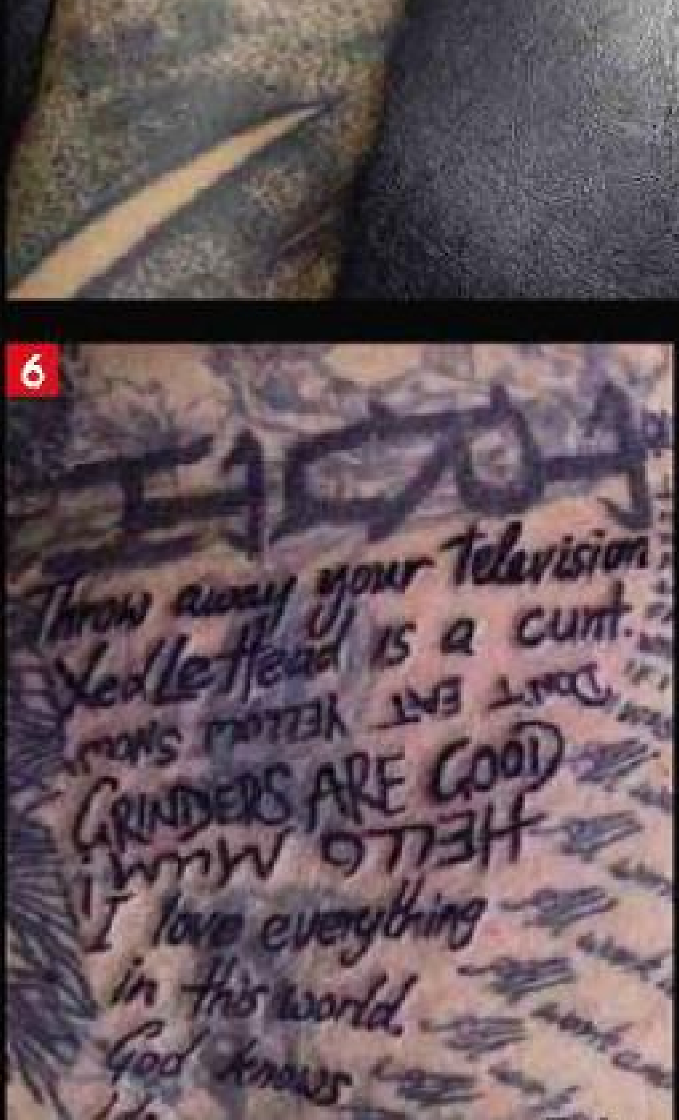
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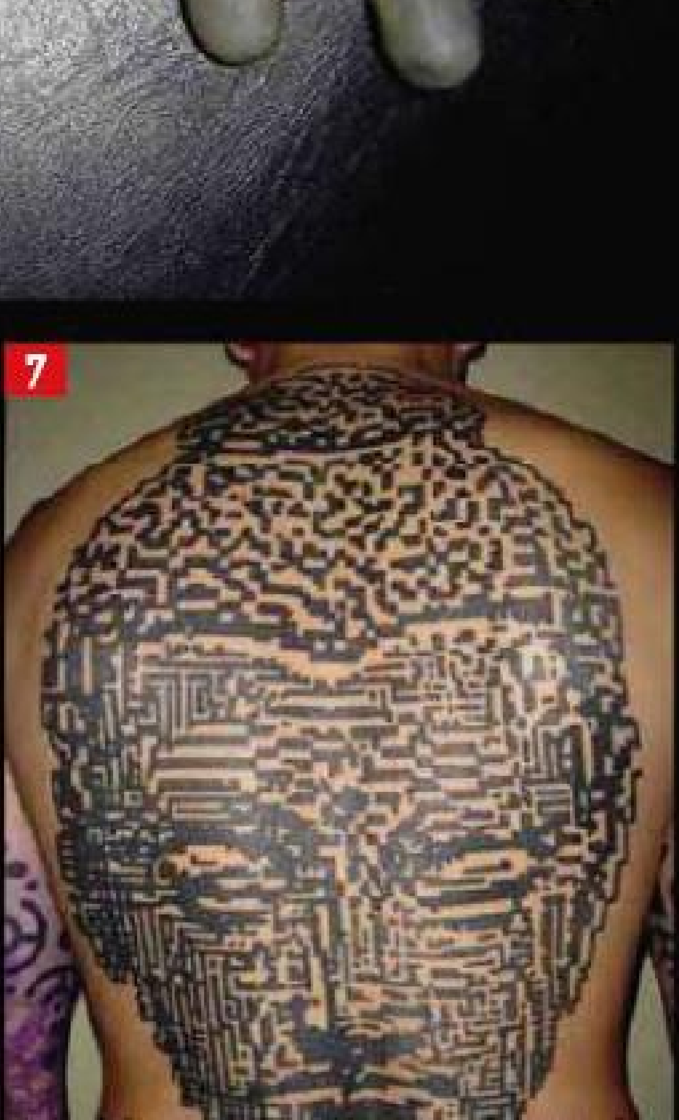
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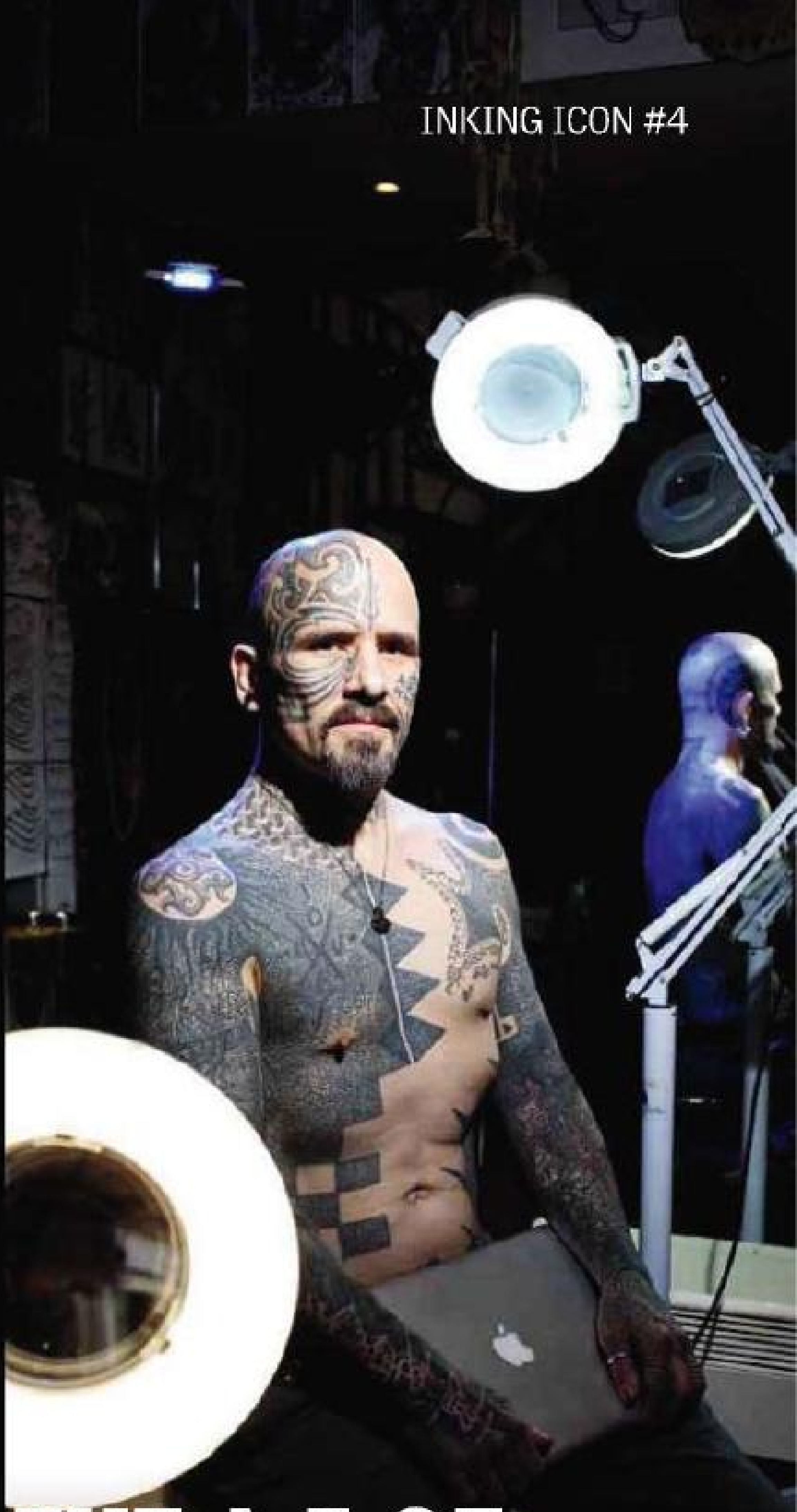


THE A-Z OF XED LE HEAD

The pattern-obsessed icon's best pieces

1 MUDRA

"I did this on a good friend, Alice, who brought me a smaller drawing, but I gently insisted we go much, much bigger."

2 SPIRAL

"This piece was done on an awesome Argentinian tattooist. It took two sessions because he took Ketamine and freaked out during the first one."

3 MICRO PATTERN

"I really love attention to detail, so I put the five pence coin against the ink to show off how intricate this piece is."

4 HEAD

"I don't often do colour work, but the irrepressible Mad Alan browbeat me into doing this. I thought the bright pattern suited his personality, and I was really chuffed with the result."

5 HANDS

"This is the result of a session between Lucky Diamond Rich and I. The 'X' symbolises drug freedom. We've both fallen off the wagon at times, but this was done during a period when both our wagons were rolling good and true. Lucky cried like a baby when I did his."

6 WRITING

"Tattooist and good pal, Steve A, asked me to contribute to a cover-up piece made up of different writing. Of course, I jumped at the chance to add 'Xed Le Head is a cunt'."

7 BUDDHA HEAD

"I fucking love this! I started off by playing around on Photoshop, and a few hours later I'd constructed this image. I still can't work out how I got this from a photo of a carved head."

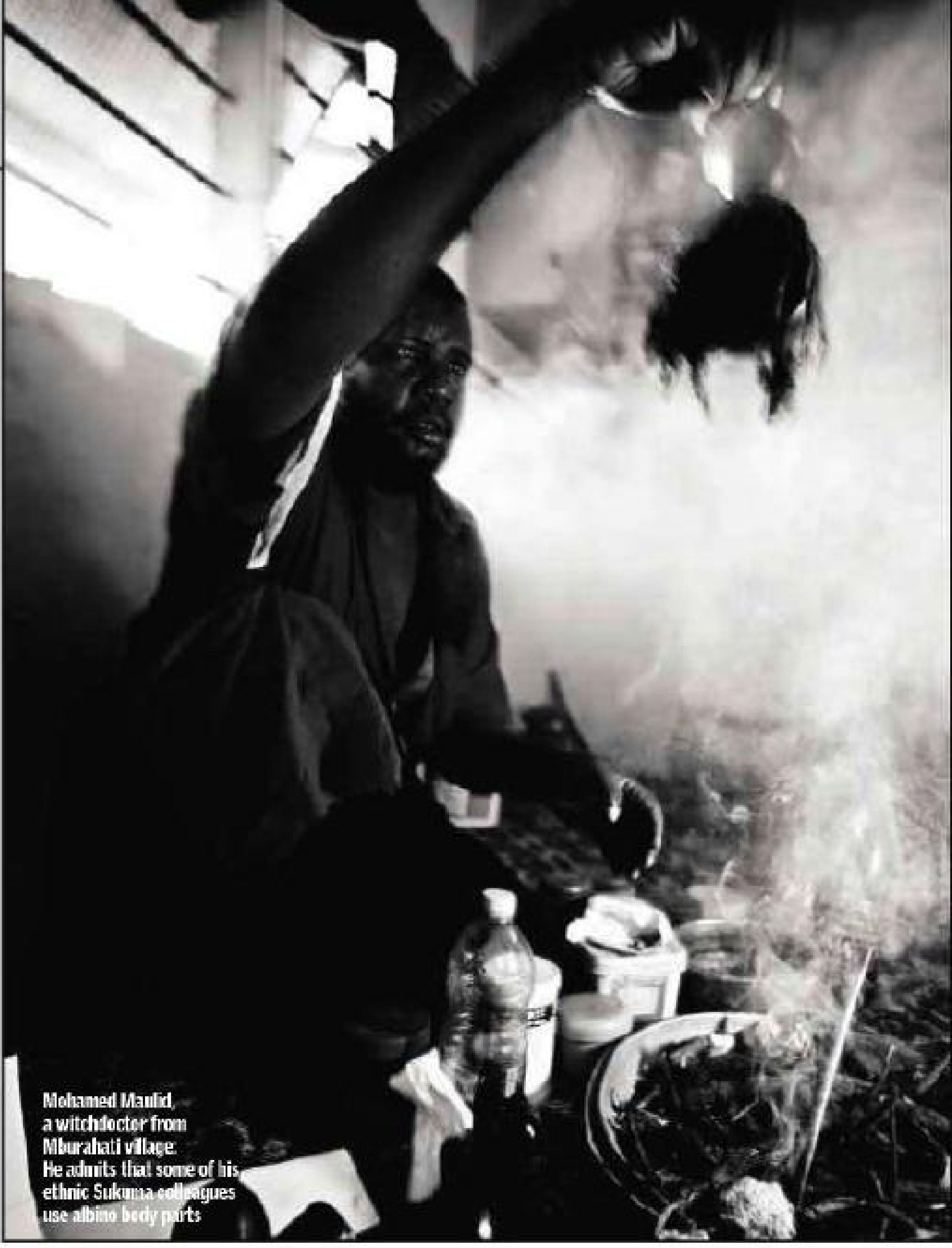
This man carries a whistle to blow for help, in case he's attacked for his blood or limbs. He's one of thousands of albinos in Tanzania who live in constant fear

WORDS **SORREL NEUSS**
PHOTOS **FRANCK VOGEL**

It's two years since three men, armed with machetes, burst into 10-year-old Bibiana Mbushi's house, then hacked off her right leg and two of her fingers. She's petrified it'll happen again. Shy and withdrawn, Bibiana touches her prosthetic leg with her mutilated hand and shields her eyes from the sun with the other as she avoids having to talk by staring out of the classroom window. The other pupils at her school near Mwanza, Tanzania, have dark skin and black hair, but Bibiana is fair, blonde, and has dark blue eyes. She's albino and she was attacked for her 'white gold'.

Around 17,000 people in Tanzania have albinism, a genetic disorder that hampers the production of the pigment melanin, which protects the skin from UV light. People with albinism are more likely to develop skin cancer, and many in Tanzania die by age 30. But now they have more than just the sun to be frightened of. Since 2007, around 60 albinos – known as *zeru zeru*, or 'ghosts' – have been hunted down →

Bibiana at her desk at school. Three men cut off her leg and three fingers in 2008



Mohamed Maulid, a witchdoctor from Mburahati village. He admits that some of his ethnic Sukuma colleagues use albino body parts

by witchdoctors, who make potions out of their blood, arms, legs, genitalia, ears, noses and tongues. Believing that albino body parts possess supernatural powers, greedy businessmen and politicians pay vast sums for these grim concoctions, convinced they'll bring them riches, love or good luck. A whole albino body is worth around $70,000 (£45,000), and this new trade in body parts is so lucrative, it's rapidly spreading to neighbouring Congo, Burundi and Kenya.

Many albinos live in constant fear. At the end of 2007 there were three living in Llungu village on the shores of Lake Victoria. But that year, 10-year old Rebecca Machungwa was killed, and a few months later, thugs came for Vumilia Makoye. Now, Yussuf Elias, 26, is the only one left. "I'm the next on the list," he says. "Since Vumilia's death, I always carry my whistle in my pocket... it's my only protection."

He isn't difficult to spot. At first glance, black African albinos look like white people and, at the beginning of the last century, albino children – thought to be proof of their mother's supposed affair with a white European man – were killed at birth. Although that seldom happens now, those with the condition are still referred to as *mzungu*, 'colonial white man', and they're seen as a curse while alive and magical when dead.

Kill or cure

For centuries, witchdoctors have provided the only medicine locals trust, and according to the Traditional Healers' association, at least 30 per cent of the population use their services for treatment against cancer, AIDS or to find love or wealth. For years, fishermen who associate white skin with riches have paid hairdressers for albino locks, which they weave into their nets in the belief it'll bring in a good catch, and men with AIDS have also been known to rape albino women as a 'cure'.

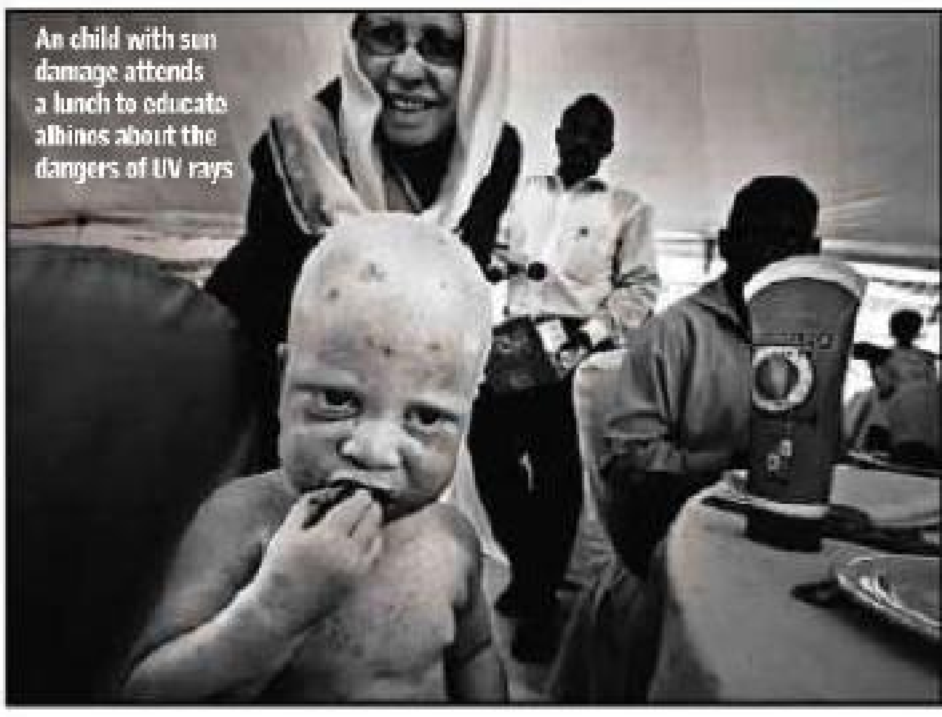
"Men with AIDS have been known to rape albino women as a 'cure'"

But *killing* for potions is a new phenomenon. Andrei Engstrand-Neacsu, an aid worker with the humanitarian organisation International Federation Of The Red Cross And Red Crescent, explains that while no-one knows why albinos are being attacked *now*, some witchdoctors in countries such as Nigeria and Uganda kill children and use their innocent blood to 'bless' businesses. "Similarly, albinos have been singled out by the colour of their skin and are used in the same way," he says.

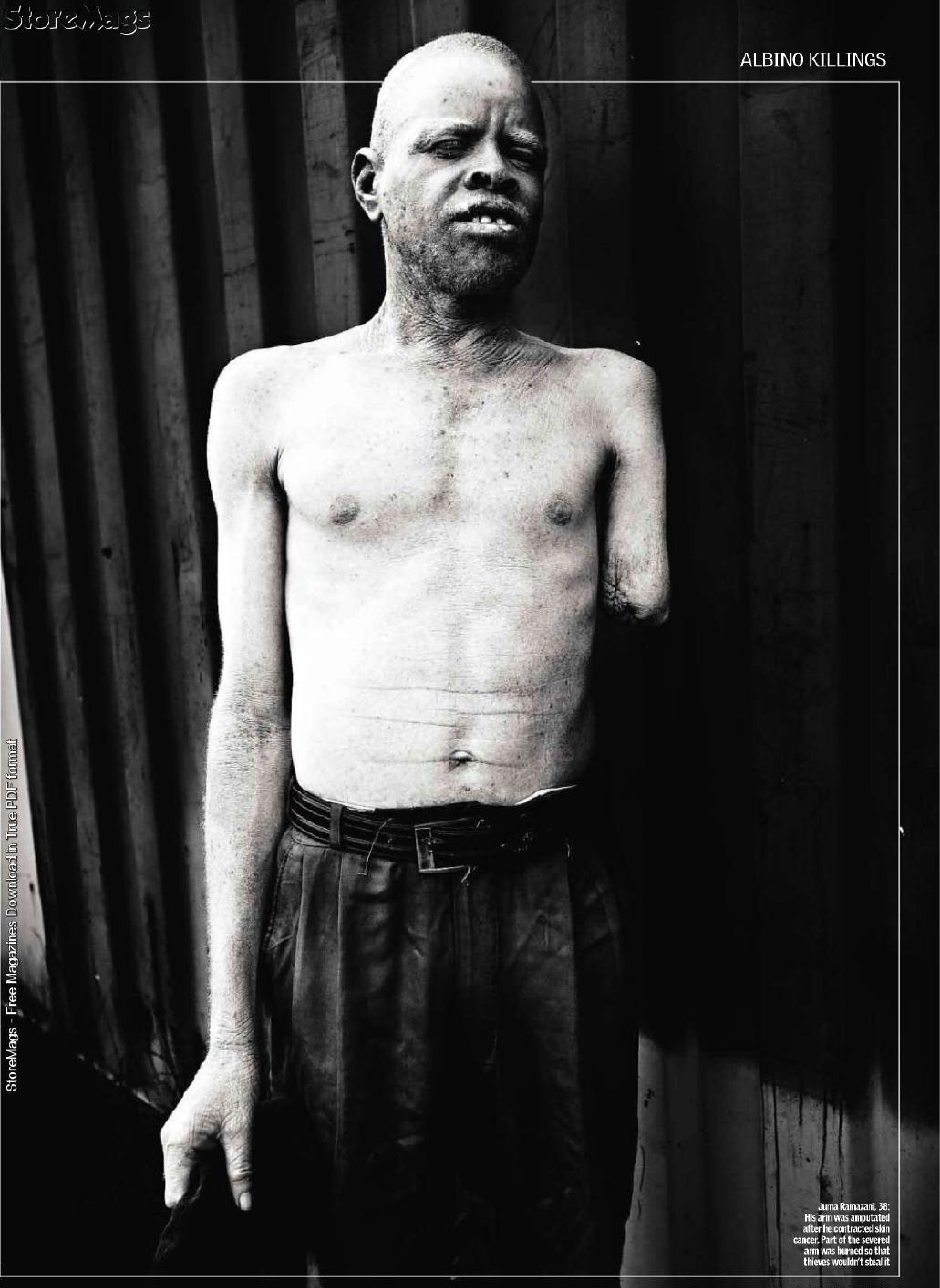
Bibiana was attacked because of a deal her uncle made with witchdoctors. After Bibiana's parents died from AIDS, her aunt and uncle adopted her and her two siblings. Believing that Bibiana and her sister Tindi, who is also an albino, brought shame on the family, her uncle was keen to sell them. A leg, arm, or a cup of albino blood is worth $2,000 (£1,300) apiece, which would take a farmer 10 years to earn, and destitute men are prepared to act on behalf of witchdoctors for a cut of the cash. In January →

Some fishermen at Lake Victoria weave albino hair into their nets for a good catch

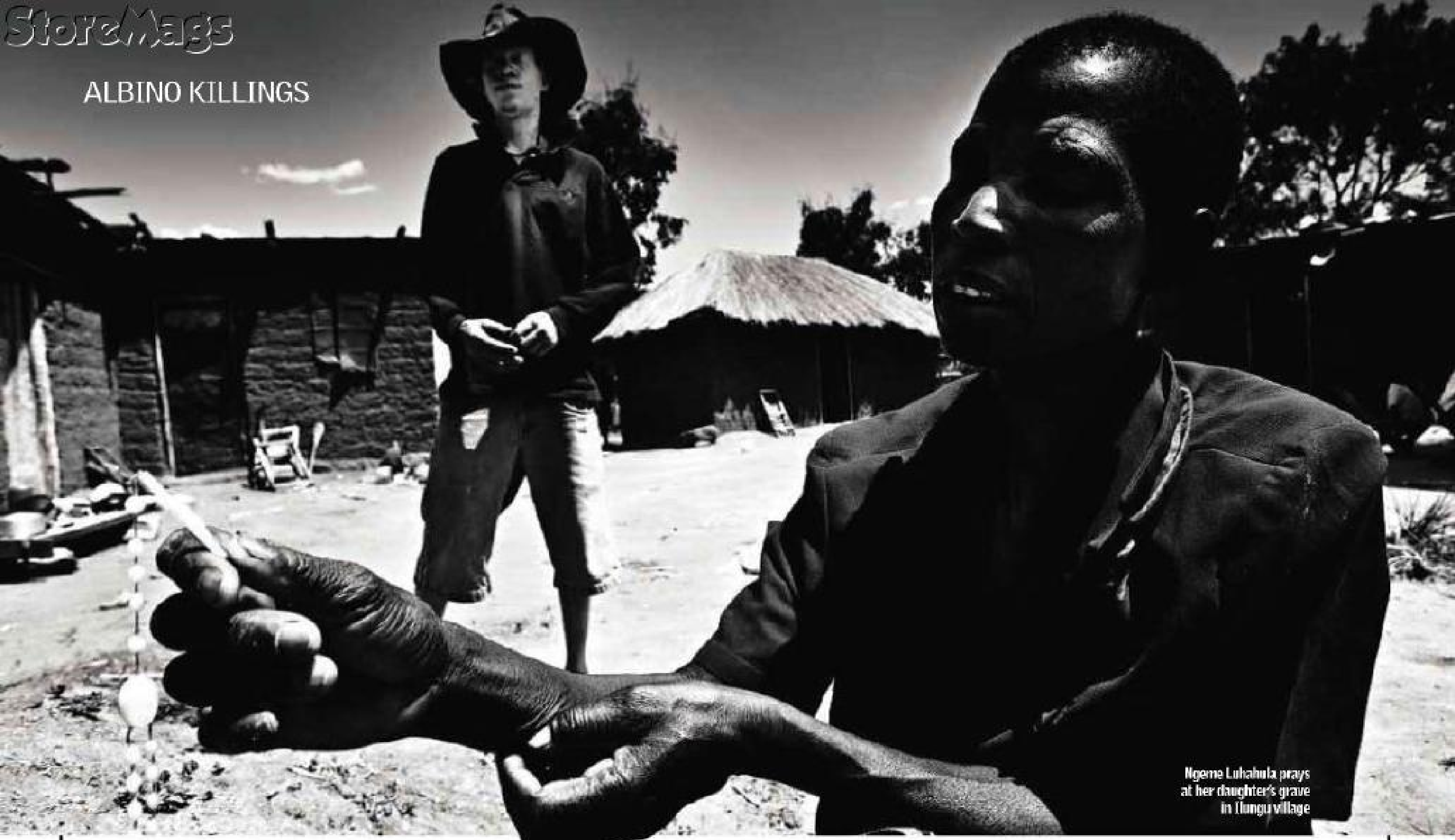
Witchdoctor Mohamed Maulid makes legal potions



An child with sun damage attends a lunch to educate albinos about the dangers of UV rays



Juma Ramazani, 38: His arm was amputated after he contracted skin cancer. Part of the severed arm was burned so that thieves wouldn't steal it



Ngeme Luhahula prays at her daughter's grave in Llungu village

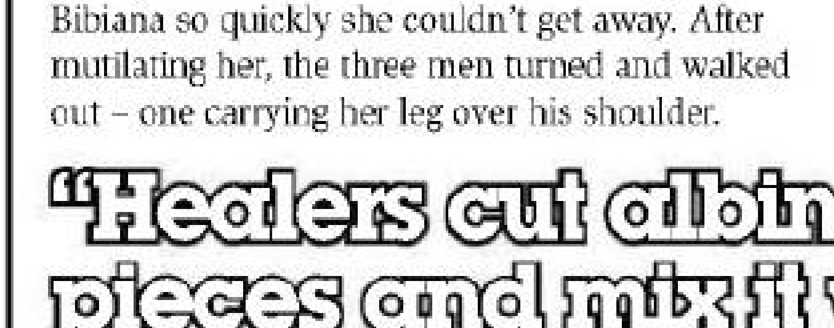
2008, Bibiana's attackers entered the house at bedtime and told the children they were policemen who needed to take something. Tindi escaped by hiding in the shadows, but the men lunged at Bibiana so quickly she couldn't get away. After mutilating her, the three men turned and walked out – one carrying her leg over his shoulder.

> "Healers cut albino flesh into small pieces and mix it with ground bone"

The girl's stunned aunt, who wasn't in on her husband's agreement, rushed to a neighbour's house to call for help. Many Tanzanians don't have a phone and ambulances are scarce, so almost all albinos attacked in this way bleed to death. But Bibiana was lucky, as the only ambulance at the nearby Geita hospital was free. The men who mutilated Bibiana are also lucky; while her uncle was caught by the police and is now in prison, the hitmen were never found, and the witchdoctor who hired them got their prize.

Brutal body-snatchers

It's difficult to know which healer was behind the attack. Photojournalist Franck Vogel, who took the pictures on these pages, visited Mohamed Maulid, a witchdoctor from Mburahati village, about 30km from Dar-es-Salaam. Maulid admitted that some of his colleagues from the Sukuma tribe use albino body parts, but only in the Mwanza region, adding, "I'm not a Sukuma and I don't agree with them." But Franck explains, "He would never tell me even if he *does* use albino parts, and it would've been too dangerous for me to ask any more questions."



Miners dig for gold at Ngasamo mine after a witchdoctor blessed the site with a potion made from albino body parts

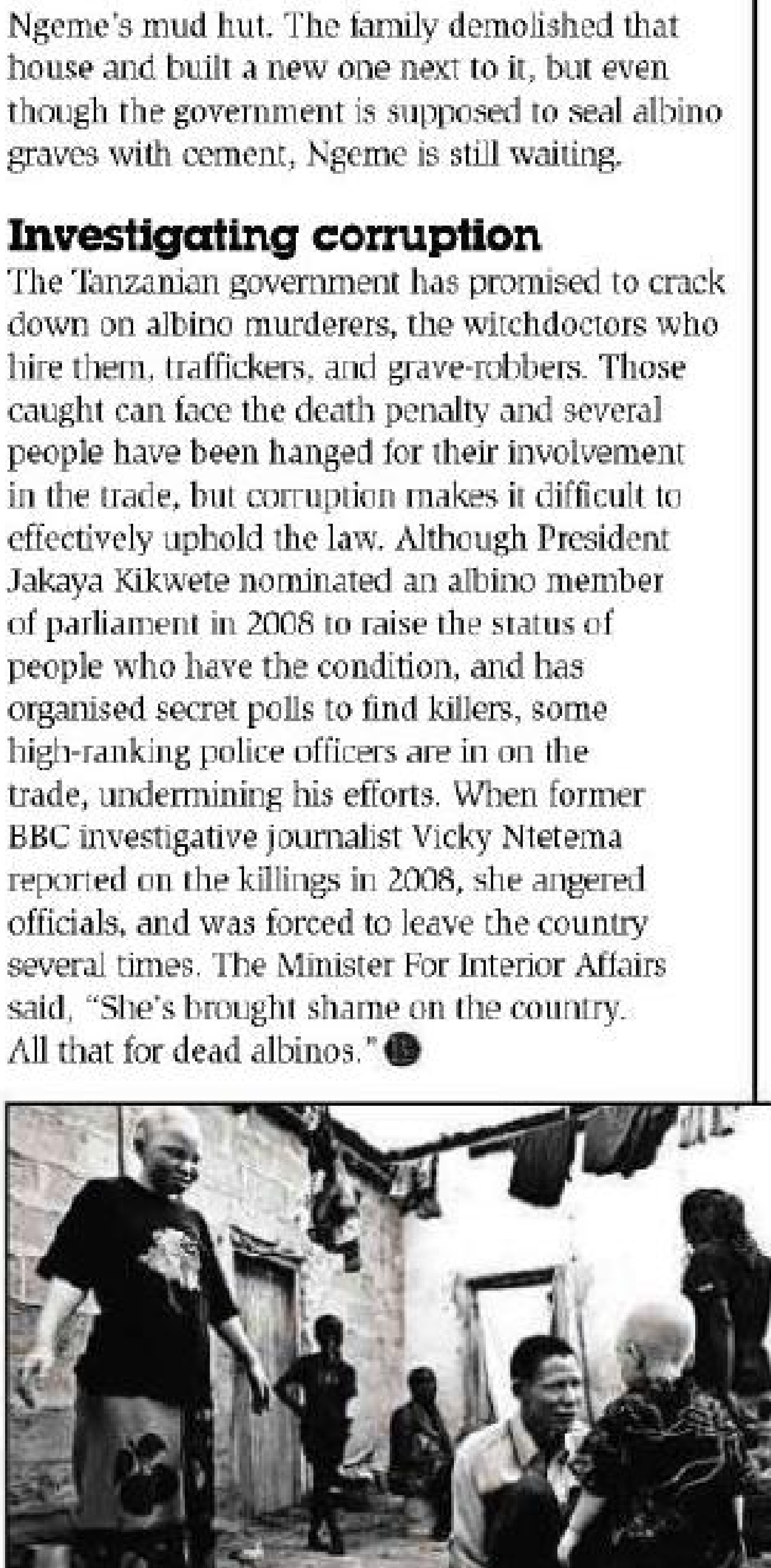
However, Franck knows what happened to Bibiana's severed leg and fingers. To make their valuable potions, healers cut albino flesh into small pieces, grind down the bones using stones, then pound the two into a paste. The liquid that oozes out is siphoned off and put into a tiny, perfume-bottle-sized bottle, which is used sparingly during ceremonies for paying customers, such as the owners of a gold mine in Ngasamo.

Derelict since WWII, when a flood killed 200 workers, Ngasamo mine was resurrected in the 1990s when local businessmen bought a portion of the land. Unsure where to dig, the new owners turned to a witchdoctor for help. After studying maps of the area and surveying the mine, the healer picked a spot, sprinkled a few drops of his macabre potion on the ground, chanted to the spirits, then told the businessmen where to mine. As well as receiving a healthy fee for his advice, the witchdoctor continues to get a share in the profits of the gold brought to the surface.

With a salary like this at stake, it's not surprising that healers will go to any lengths to get their hands on albino body parts, and several collude with grave-robbers to dig up cadavers. Ngeme Luhahula, from Llungu village, prays at her daughter Vumilia's resting place every day. Vumilia Makoye was 17 when two men entered the house in 2008, held Ngeme at the front door, and slit the teenager's throat, draining her blood, before slicing off her arms and legs. To make sure that the murderers didn't come back to take the rest of the body, Vumilia was buried where she died; beneath the earth floor of Ngeme's mud hut. The family demolished that house and built a new one next to it, but even though the government is supposed to seal albino graves with cement, Ngeme is still waiting.

Investigating corruption

The Tanzanian government has promised to crack down on albino murderers, the witchdoctors who hire them, traffickers, and grave-robbers. Those caught can face the death penalty and several people have been hanged for their involvement in the trade, but corruption makes it difficult to effectively uphold the law. Although President Jakaya Kikwete nominated an albino member of parliament in 2008 to raise the status of people who have the condition, and has organised secret polls to find killers, some high-ranking police officers are in on the trade, undermining his efforts. When former BBC investigative journalist Vicky Ntetema reported on the killings in 2008, she angered officials, and was forced to leave the country several times. The Minister For Interior Affairs said, "She's brought shame on the country. All that for dead albinos."



An albino family in a Dar-es-salam suburb: (l-r) Agnellar, her husband, Japhet Felix, and son Camillius

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- If it's a film, DVD, author or band you won't read about in other mags, you'll find it in *Bizarre*
- Horror, arthouse, animation, experimental, the downright weird… *Bizarre* celebrates the sorts of films, books and music most magazines won't touch
- Don't listen to what other mags say – *Bizarre*'s reviews are written by experts in the unusual, and they'll give you the *real* story on the best new releases

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YOURBIZARRE.COM

DEAD SPACE 2

This time it's war 133

BLACK SWAN

FILM OF THE MONTH
BIZARRE

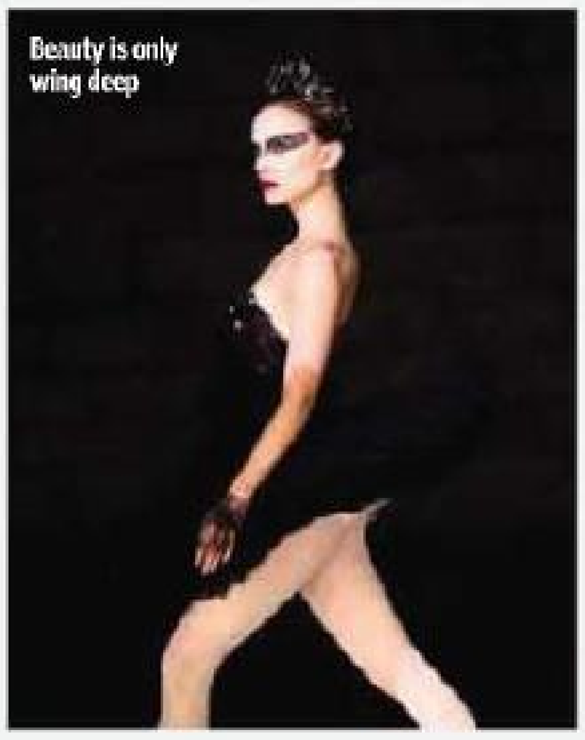
Feathers fly when a ballerina dances in the dark

YOU'LL BE HAUNTED BY THIS psychological thriller about a prima ballerina's struggle for perfection.

Natalie Portman plays Nina, who's obsessed with proving to her manipulative choreographer (Vincent Cassel) that she's capable of dancing the split-personality Swan Queen in his production of *Swan Lake*. But while Nina finds it easy to portray the character's innocent side, she struggles to capture her dark eroticism, and is forced to look deep inside herself. The further Nina delves into her subconscious, the faster she spirals into horrifying madness.

Although Portman's brilliant performance heightens the emotion, this film's magnificence lies in the direction of Darren Aronofsky (*The Wrestler* and *Requiem For A Dream*). While *Black Swan* gets off to a slow start, it soon throws the audience into Nina's paranoia and the visuals are beautifully exotic, proving that Aronofsky is every bit as good as Hitchcock, Polanski or Argento.

The plot moves effortlessly between reality and fantasy, and otherworldly events dominate the story. For example, feathers unexpectedly burst through Nina's naked flesh during her delirium.


Beauty is only wing deep

Almost every scene contains haunting – though not gratuitous – images of self-harming, steamy sexual awakenings, and malevolent doppelgängers.

Topped with an exquisite score, composed by long-time collaborator Clint Mansell, *Black Swan* reinforces Aronofsky's position as one of the most intriguing and imaginative forces in modern cinema. This film will keep you rapt right through to its violent, blood-drenched climax. **Billy Chainsaw**

A schizophrenic film that'll blow your mind off-ski
★★★★★

At least the white stain won't show

Q+A Clint Mansell *Soundtrack composer*

Did you always want to compose music for films?
No, it happened by chance. I'd left my band Pop Will Eat Itself and moved to New York to make a solo album, but it didn't work out. I met Darren Aronofsky, and he needed someone to write the music for *Pi* (1998). That job gave me a framework to focus on and allowed me to stop trying to write songs, and start creating musical passages and atmospheric pieces instead.

Which film soundtrack first made you sit up and pay attention?
Although it doesn't have a soundtrack as such, it was David Lynch's *Eraserhead*. I remember recording that film when it was on TV late one night, during the early days of Channel 4. I got obsessed with it. Later, I bought the album of the score, which is just noise apart from 'The Lady In the Radiator'. Because the sound on televisions was pretty awful back then, I used to play the album through my stereo while watching the film.

What's your favourite soundtrack?
The original version of *The Wicker Man*, which is just a bunch of pagan folk songs composed by Paul Giovanni. I love stuff that makes you aware that you're in an alien environment. I love sountracks that make you say, 'OK, I don't know what the fuck is going on here. I don't know what this music is and why all these people are acting strange.' *The Wicker Man* soundtrack really captures that, and puts you right in the midst of the weirdness.

A PRIMA BALLERINA SPIRALS INTO HORRIFYING MADNESS

Watch more trailers

The Japanese remake of *Glee* was bleak

CONFESSIONS

A Japanese horror film set in a school? Surely not…

THIS IS A JAW-DROPPING Japanese psychological thriller, about a schoolteacher's attempt to wreak vengeance on the students who murdered her daughter.

Events get off to an intense start, as the grieving mother stands in front of her indifferent pupils and delivers a lengthy monologue about her child's demise. The foreboding atmosphere intensifies, as she announces that the perpetrators are among them, and that the milk they've just drunk was spiked with the blood of her dead, AIDS-infected partner. From then on chaos reigns, as the killers go off the rails and the truth is unravelled via a series of interrelated confessions.

Writer/director Tetsuya Nakashima is one of cinema's few genuine auteurs, so it's no surprise that his brutal satire of Japan's repulsive cult of school bullying (AKA *Ijime*) defies expectations and narrative convention. But while Nakashima's film is considerably darker than his previous outings, he hasn't completely jettisoned the flamboyant visual style he used to great effect in *Kamikaze Girls*. Instead, he's removed the cartoonish aspects to suit *Confession*'s more realist tone. His often scathing black humour remains intact though, brilliantly offsetting the gore and violence to give greater impact to these savage moments.

Remarkably, this is Japan's entry for Best Foreign Language Film in the 2011 Oscars, though sadly it's doubtful that such an unflinching, non-redemptive assault on the senses will bag an award. **Billy Chainsaw**

The game of kiss-chase had taken a turn

CHAOS REIGNS, AS THE KILLERS GO OFF THE RAILS IN THIS BRUTAL FILM

A black lesson in terror that deserves a prize
★★★★★

HEREAFTER

Shock, horror! Hollywood legend Clint Eastwood has tackled the supernatural. As to be expected, the filmmaker favours reflectiveness over full-blown scares, in three intersecting tales about people who are dealing with different aspects of death: bereavement, communicating with spirits, and the afterlife. It's an emotive and curious watch, but its impact is reduced by an excessively sentimental finale. **BC** ★★

NEDS

Set in 1970s Glasgow, this film is a brutal portrait of a brainy kid who follows in the footsteps of his violent brother. Although *Neds* aims for gritty realism, the story's emotional power is undermined by moments of incongruous fantasy, including a hallucinatory slug-fest between the boy and Jesus. But it's a mild distraction from a compelling drama. **BC** ★★★

BRIGHTON ROCK

Sam Riley (*Control*) stars as cut-throat gangster Pinkie in this flawed but entertaining adaptation of Graham Greene's 1938 novel. Set in the 1960s, when mods and rockers clashed on Brighton beach, this crime thriller follows Pinkie's plight after a revenge killing. Although the plot contains a few dark, violent scenes, this film doesn't capture the volatile menace of Greene's writing. **BC** ★★★

THE FIGHTER

This triumph-over-adversity boxing flick is as much about dysfunctional fuck-ups as it is about sport. Based on the true story of battling underdog 'Irish' Micky Ward, Mark Wahlberg and Christian Bale give their best performances yet as the young Micky and his troubled older half-brother Dickie, who trained him. Violent and emotive, you don't have to be a fight-fan to enjoy it. **BC** ★★★★

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***BIZARRE* FILM EDITOR**

"A riveting journey into the mind of killer clown, John Wayne Gacy"
★★★★

FULL DETAILS AT **TINYURL.COM/BIZARRECUT6**

SONS OF ANARCHY: SEASON TWO

That's when I fell for the leader of the pack

AFTER A CRACKING first season, the US biker drama returns with a vengeance.

Boasting seriously twisted plotlines and loads of sex and violence, it's one of the most addictive and affecting TV shows of recent years.

Hellboy's Ron Perlman reprises his meaty role as the fair-but-fearsome president of the Californian motorbike club Sons Of Anarchy (AKA SAMCRO), who, together with his ballsy missus (Katey Sagal) and antagonistic stepson (*Green Street*'s Charlie Hunnam), helps maintain the status quo in the fictional town of Charming. As a direct result of the previous season's killer climax, Season Two kicks off with dissent amongst the SAMCRO ranks and tensions reach boiling point. To make matters worse, the authorities are still breathing down their necks, and an ultra-ruthless bunch of white supremacists are attempting a take-over that threatens the gang's gun-running business and their lives.

All of the action and drama that made the first season so compelling has been cranked up to 11 for this run. It's brilliantly written, with a gripping story driven by raw emotion.

> WITH A SERIOUSLY TWISTED PLOT AND LOADS OF SEX AND VIOLENCE, IT'S ADDICTIVE

The outstanding performances are firmly grounded in reality, and Henry Rollins is particularly convincing as the Nazi.

This season won't appeal to everyone because the characters are trapped in a vicious circle, making it impossible for them to live happily ever after. But those who don't need to feel warm and fluffy inside will love its darkness. What happens to the outsiders will keep you hooked, right through to the kick-in-the-guts finale.

Billy Chainsaw

A hell of a ride with a car-crash ending ★★★★

Biker Groove

Born to be wild

Charlie Hunnam, who plays buff badass Jackson 'Jax' Teller, began his acting career Ant'n'Dec-style by appearing in the Geordie kids show, *Byker Grove*. A year later, aged 17, he gained cred by playing Nathan in the risqué series, *Queer as Folk*.

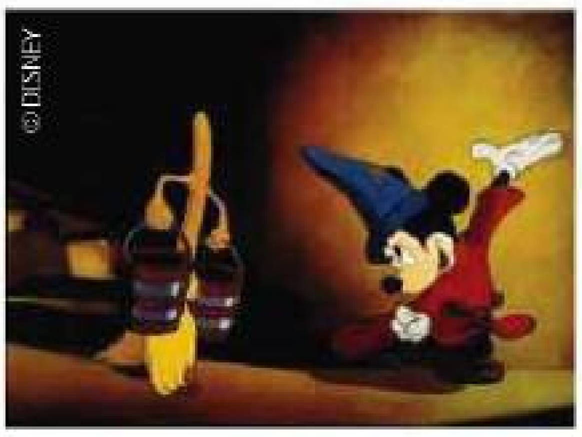
That's a reet beltin moata, meayt

In hell, the angels all look like Dennis Hopper

DVD OF THE MONTH BIZARRE

THE REEF

Based on a true story, this minimalist thriller follows four Aussies who have capsized at sea and are trying to reach land without being munched by a man-eating shark. Packed with sharp, sudden shocks, *The Reef* is tense all the way through, and the cast's convincing performances, coupled with some impressive underwater photography, make up for the predictable ending. **BC** ★★★



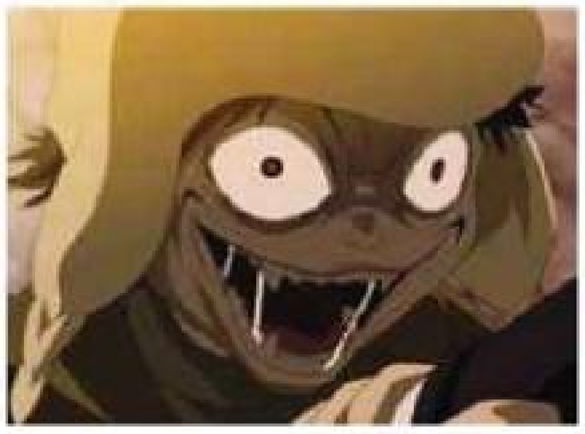
© DISNEY

FANTASIA

When Walt Disney released this masterpiece in 1940, it was so far ahead of its time that it flopped. But this groundbreaking mix of classical music and mind-blowing drawings has since gained classic status. Although the animation is occasionally over-whimsical, sequences such as the terrifying 'Night On Bald Mountain' make *Fantasia* timeless. **BC** ★★★★★

ALICE COOPER: THEATRE OF DEATH

Bizarre was lucky enough to be in the audience for this Alice Cooper gig in 2009, and it was a thrilling show from the king of shock rock. But as half of the fun of seeing an Alice gig is screaming 'School's Out' with fellow fans and seeing that his gory stage tricks don't always work as planned, watching him on the telly is a poor substitute for the real thing. **DMcC** ★★★



VAMPIRE KNIGHT, VOLUME 1

In this manga equivalent of *Twilight*, prefects Yuki and Zero must protect a 'day class' of humans from a 'night class' of vampires. There's no reason why bloodsuckers would want to hang out at school, and the action's mainly focused on Yuki's wet crush on mysterious vamp Kaname. The best bit is the strange plush rabbit wearing a top hat in the gothic Lolita-style closing credits. **EG** ★★★

A SERBIAN FILM

Fiddling kiddies, and mummies, and daddies

PART THRILLER, part hardcore horror, this is, without a doubt, the darkest, harshest and most thought-provoking film of recent years. Riding in on a wave of controversy, the movie makes your skin crawl and your mind go into meltdown, as it's hard to rationalise the atrocities it features.

The traumatic plot, which had the censors reaching for their scissors, follows a retired porn-stud who's given a clandestine offer that'll set him and his family up for life. The deal comes at a terrible price, thrusting him into a soul- and sanity-destroying nightmare.

But even though the media has dismissed this film as a worthless exploitation flick, it's brilliantly shot and convincingly acted, with unnerving music and sound effects that intensify to unbearable levels, particularly during the bizarre hallucination sequences.

The way in which the film deals with paedophilia and abject degradation is undeniably unpleasant, but director Srdjan Spasojevis and co-writer Aleksandar Radivojevic haven't set out to titillate viewers, or shock for the sake of it. They've created a surprisingly moral allegory about corruption and human abuse, which is designed to shake us out of our complacency about the world around us. **Billy Chainsaw**

Hardcore rape, paedophilia and incest that'll wage war on your senses ★★★★

Terrorvision

What lurks beneath the crack?

Q+A Srdjan Spasojevic *Director/Co-writer*

Srdjan clenches his jaw and takes on his critics

What inspired you and Aleksandar Radivojevic to make such a dark and challenging film?

Our initial idea was to create an honest, unflinching depiction of the political and emotional turmoil that has governed our lives in Serbia over the past two decades of war and transition. But we wanted it to be philosophical and confrontational, not a hermetic film that dealt exclusively with our local tragedies. We wanted to tell a story that has global overtones and Serbia reflects the ways of the modern world – it tries to imitate them and fails miserably.

Are you concerned that some people might think your film is exploitative?

Our initial intention wasn't to shock or break any world records for gruesomeness, but to face our problems honestly, and to express them in the most exact and direct way possible. In order to hammer many of our ideas home, we couldn't make compromises, or think about the consequences. Maybe that's why this film is so ferocious.

***A Serbian Film* is the most cut feature in 16 years and several film festivals refused to screen it. What do you think about the outrage it's caused?**

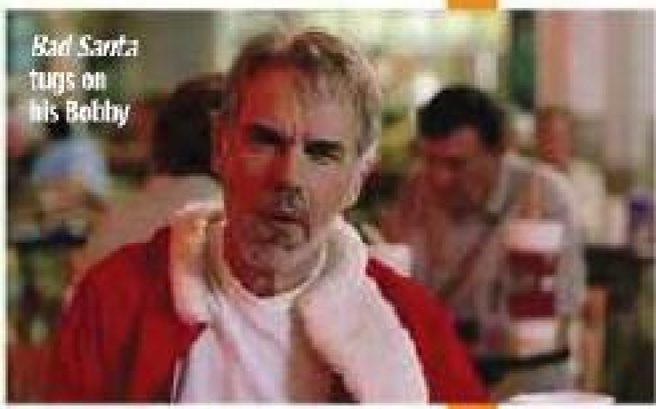
Some people will always have issues with honesty and truth. People don't like to talk about real problems as much nowadays.

WORDS: DEN OF GEEK

THE MOVIE MOLE

Digging up the best film gossip

Abseiling on *Alien* entrails isn't as easy as it looks



Bad Santa tugs on his Bobby

Mole keeps finding conflicting news on the progress of the **Alien** prequels. Despite rumours of a delay, director Ridley Scott and co are going to start filming next year. It may now only be one film, rather than two, possibly starring Michelle Yeoh and Noomi Rapace. The title, contrary to internet rumblings, is not *Alien: Paradise*.

The planned reboot of **Buffy The Vampire Slayer** is, guttingly, pressing ahead. Mole has discovered that Joss Whedon, who successfully steered seven seasons of the TV show to glory, doesn't want to be involved, and he has expressed regret that some fool in Hollywood is even considering going near the franchise again. Mole likes Whedon. We are friends.

If you're waiting for critical opinion on Kevin Smith's new, low-budget horror, **Red State**, give up now. The writer/director has said he's not interested in generating reviews at all. He's selling *Red State* at the Sundance Film Festival and he's been releasing pictures and information on the flick whenever he feels like it. It'll be out in the UK later this year.

Mole clearly disapproves of the rude film **Bad Santa** – Billy Bob Thornton's sexual technique could use a little work. Just saying. Anyway, he might get the chance to offend Christmas-lovers the world over again, as he's floated the possibility of being in a **Bad Santa 2**. Mole hopes he will, but that the film has more smut and a less daft plot.

Finally, Mole has good news. Director Neill Blomkamp is teaming up again with his *District 9* star Sharlto Copley for a new science fiction film, **Elysium**. Not much is known about the story, except it's set on Earth at some point in the future. Mole also, if it helps, suspects there are no prawns in it.

DEN OF GEEK!

The square-eyed experts at Denofgeek.com look at the rest of this month's DVD releases

Misfits: "Call me Muffin Top again. I dare you!"

The third series of the BBC's teatime fantasy adventure **Merlin** (★★★) went through a few bumps but, aided by a strong finale and some impressive episodes amid the usual hokum, it proved to be the show's best run. It's a tough act to follow, but series four is on the way.

Meanwhile, E4 continues to reap the rewards of its low-budget heroes-with-ASBOs series **Misfits** (★★★★). With its confident writing and interesting storylines, the second series maintains the standard of the first. The acting also continues to improve and impress.

Cancelled before the first season had run its course on TV, *Battlestar Galactica* spin-off **Caprica** (★★★) is hunting for redemption via its DVD release. It won't get it. The show's complexity and ambition is admirable and, at times, quite terrific, but it lacks a clear narrative and gets bogged down by too much back-story. It's still good, but a missed opportunity.

The intrigue surrounding **I'm Still Here** (★★), a 'documentary' that follows Joaquin Phoenix for a year as he makes the transition from an actor to a rapper, was that no-one was sure whether it was real or not. Sadly, the film-makers gave us the answer – it's fake – and watching the film in that light robs makes it much less interesting. Phoenix, to be fair, is brilliant. The film, to be fair, is not.

Merlin was disapointed he couldn't get it up for Debbie McGee

Caprica: "Take that, Gizmo!"

Finally, **Jonah Hex** (★) looked as though it might be interesting, because it gave Josh Brolin a long-overdue lead role. Sadly, it's clearly been chopped to shreds in the editing room. It's a muddled mess that's only 80 minutes long, and it's heartbreaking to watch Brolin gamely battling on, while everyone else involved in making the film seems to have stopped giving a shit long before production wrapped.

To find out what's going on in TV and movieland, and for plenty of nerdy ranting, go to Denofgeek.com

K-20: THE LEGEND OF THE BLACK MASK

The bastard child of Zorro, Batman and Ziyi Zhang

MANGA COLLIDES with 1930s' adventure comicbooks in this quirky Asian Steampunk blockbuster.

Set in an alternate reality where WWII didn't happen and Japan has become a polarised, authoritarian society, the plot follows masked super-villain K-20's attempt at world-domination. A poor circus acrobat, played by Takeshi Kaneshiro from *House Of Flying Daggers*, is framed for K-20's dastardly deeds and then seeks his vengeance.

Thanks to Kaneshiro's unbridled dynamism, the acrobat's transformation from humbled prole to vigilante and parkour-whiz is eye-poppingly impressive, and the acting is complemented by the fast and furious direction of Shimako Sato, who plays Hollywood at its own game.

Although the narrative is convoluted, Sato has a flair for adrenalised drama: in the show-stopping opener, a Police Zeppelin disgorges a fleet of helicopter-aeroplane hybrids over a vast metropolis, and the film ends with an explosive good-versus-evil showdown.

The dialogue is sometimes cheesy and this film is over two hours long, so it sags in places. But these are minor flaws given that it's filled with awesome set-pieces. **Billy Chainsaw**

An action-packed steampunk adventure, marred only by its length and cheesy lines ★★★

His wife's got two birds in her bush

THE HOLE

This flashback to 1980s family-in-jeopardy fright flicks, such as *Poltergeist*, is a spine-tingler. Two young brothers discover a seemingly bottomless hole in the basement of their new home, which unleashes their darkest fears. Featuring a toy clown and a spooky dead kid, the manifest evil is old hat, but Joe Dante's smoke-and-mirrors direction is nightmarish and gripping. **BC** ★★★

PEEPING TOM

When it was released in 1960, *Peeping Tom* was dismissed by *The Spectator* as "the sickest and filthiest" film ever made. But it's since been reclaimed as a British classic, inspiring directors such as Martin Scorsese. There isn't much more *Bizarre* can say about it, other than this beautifully-restored 50th anniversary Blu-ray is the best way to enjoy Michael Powell's stylish tale of voyeurism, obsession and murder. **DMcC** ★★★★★

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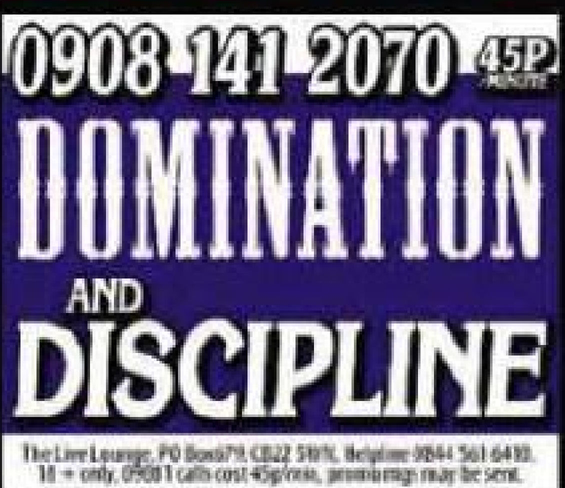
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Q+A ROB ZOMBIE

The school slacker goes witch-hunting

SEE THEM LIVE!
Rob Zombie tours the UK in March, see Robzombie.com for details.

Why has it taken you 12 years to come back and tour in the UK?
I stopped touring the world as soon as I started making movies, because I couldn't find the time. With *Hellybilly Deluxe 2*, I've put my music career to the forefront, and I've been on tour non-stop for a year. We feel like we owe everyone a real show, so we're bringing everything – the robots, skeletons, pyro and video screens.

What was it like touring with Alice Cooper last year?
I've known Alice for 17 years, and he got me excited about music when I was a kid. It was the first time I've felt as though I had the perfect touring companion, and it felt like being on the road in the 1970s or something, which is when he got famous. We went to the movies a couple of times, and he always wanted to go late at night, so I fell asleep watching *Nightmare On Elm Street*, which I guess is *apropos*.

Your drummer, Joey Jordison, (Slipknot, Murderdolls) told us you play Connect Four and Hungry Hippos on tour. Is that true?
I don't know what Connect Four is, so I didn't play that. But I admit that some weird, plastic hippo thing ended up in our dressing room, where if you pressed the teeth down, it eventually snapped shut on your finger. I don't know where it came from, but it was a favourite with John 5. He figures, what's the worst that could happen if he damages his fingers?

One of the extra tracks on the *Hellbilly Deluxe 2* reissue is 'Everything Is Boring'. What's the most boring thing you've ever done?
Going through 12 years of school. I have a low threshold for boredom. The second I have to do something I don't want to, I'm like, 'Oh God, this is so fucking boring', and I've been like that for my whole life. My report card always had one comment: 'Has the ability but will not apply himself', ha-ha!

How did you get the idea for your next film *The Lords Of Salem*?
I grew up in Massachusetts, so I knew about the Salem witch trials, and when I was a kid, we used to go to the witch museum, which is full of wax figures. About five years ago, I went to a wedding in Massachusetts and I was so bored I bought the only book for sale in the lobby of the hotel we were staying at. The book was about the Salem witch trials, and it gave me the idea for the film. In reality, all the people that were executed in Salem as witches were clearly innocent, but this film plays on the idea that maybe they weren't...

You went on *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* and helped design a haunted house. Have you got any scary tricks we could try?
For some reason on tour, we're always trying to scare each other by jumping out of nowhere, and screaming 'Freddy Krueger!' in each others' faces. It's a game John 5 picked up somewhere – I think when he was on tour with Marilyn Manson – but I'll play it in a restaurant or shopping mall. I've scared him pretty good a couple of times, and he looked like he was going to have a heart attack. The best place he got me was in a hotel elevator. The game takes a lot of patience, because you have to hide somewhere for a long time. You have to be dedicated to the joke. **Eleanor Goodman**

A special edition of *HellBilly Deluxe 2* is out 14 February

I CAN SMELL MILDEW!

VIV ALBERTINE

Feisty ex-axewoman of punk icons The Slits talks Sid Vicious' pubes and nudity

Q+A

You briefly rejoined The Slits in 2008 after they reformed. What was it like playing the guitar for the first time in 25 years?
I couldn't really play it in the first place! It felt like that TV programme, *Faking It*: 'Take a housewife and turn her into a punk rocker, you've got four months.' I sat there like a proper idiot, for a good few weeks, trying to move my fingers. My husband said, 'What the fuck are you doing? Are you mad?' But then I let myself go, and sheer emotion flowed out.

You used to date Mick Jones of The Clash, who wrote the song 'Train In Vain' about you. We hear you're performing it in February, as part of Un-Covention. That's a bit cheeky, isn't it?
I don't know how pleased he'll be, but I'm at the age where I don't want my fucking gravestone to say, 'She played by the rules, did the right thing, and now she's dead like all the rest.' If I'm not cheeky this time, why bother!

The Slits' frontwoman Ari Up sadly passed away last October. In your online blog, you picture her as a feral wild child, who was stabbed on several occasions. Did she really get attacked like that?
Yes, straight guys didn't know if they wanted to fuck us or stab us. We'd dress up in S&M gear and Doc Martens, with our hair all sticking out, looking like something out of a 1970s porn mag. We wound people up just by sitting on the Tube. Maybe Ari said something mouthy, but she was stabbed twice when I was with her.

You once shared a flat with Sid Vicious. What was he like as a housemate?
Ahhhhh, Sidney... He and Johnny Rotten would rush around the flat looking for pubic hairs. They were childish, irreverent, and naughty. But Sid and I went everywhere together. He even sat with me at art school – burping and farting until he was thrown out!

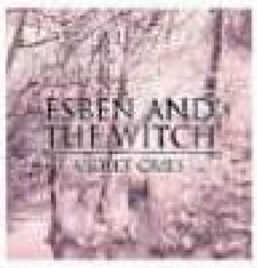
Can you tell us about 'Coulda Shoulda Woulda', which is The Slits track that you're releasing?
We recorded it at the end of a 1980 tour in America when we were into the disco scene. Neneh Cherry features on it, along with a couple of funk musicians. It wasn't released before because we split up soon after, but it seems fitting to release it now.

Can you tell us about the infamous album cover for *Cut*, where you and the other members of The Slits were naked and caked in mud?
We were originally going to use naked snaps that we took on a trip to France, but my mum said she'd spilled coffee over them, ruining them. It has only just occurred to me that she was lying! But we ended up having a pro shoot of us naked in an English country garden, so we foxed her anyway! **Stephen Daultrey**

Previously unreleased The Slits track 'Coulda Shoulda Woulda' is out in February. Viv Albertine's solo album is out later this year. Check Vivalbertine.com for details.

ESBEN AND THE WITCH

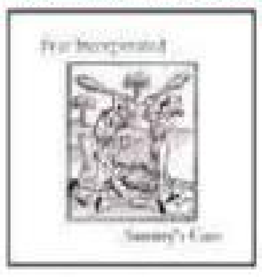
VIOLET CRIES



Named after a Danish fairytale where children are oven-roasted, Brighton's EATW are the sound of Florence Machine's dead, imaginary sister calling from the netherworld. Delicate caterwauls entwine with spectral sonics that envisage Narnia's iciest corners. **SD** ★★★★

FEAR INCORPORATED

SAWNEY'S CAVE



In Scottish myth, Sawney Bean raised a cannibalistic, incestuous family in a cave. The macabre tales on this album stand up well, but the incongruous mix of drum'n'bass, cyberpunk and deadpan theatrical vocals – from a band featuring two of goth rockers Sex Gang Children – renders them ridiculous. **EG** ★★

EARTH

ANGELS OF DARKNESS, DEMONS OF LIGHT 1

Deep from within the bowls of Earth comes a primal drone that'll send you into a trance, or inspire you to practice a magic ritual. A continuation of last album *The Bees Made Honey In The Lion's Skull*, these tracks also incorporate a cello, which weaves slow, mournful tones. **EG** ★★★★

JOHN ZACHERLE

MONSTER MASH/SCARY TALES

This is an ideal introduction to the 'cool ghoul' John Zacherle, a 1950s TV horror host who turned a generation on to the thrills of morbid humour and fright flicks. These songs were recorded for kids, but it's still fun to hear Zach goofing around with your favourite horror clichés. **DMcC** ★★★★★

BLACK SPIDERS

SONS OF THE NORTH

This is the Sheffield a-rock-nids' debut album, and it's about time. Composed of a few riotous songs from their EPs over the last two years, plus groove-laden new material about a murderous Kiss and mythology, it's full of blues-soaked energy that'll make you wanna throw your head back and howl along. **EG** ★★★★

Joe Black

What *do* you do with a drunken sailor?

SEX, DRUGS AND VAUDEVILLE

WE, AT *BIZARRE*, love Joe Black's unique, pitch-black take on vaudeville. Live, he's a great spectacle – teasing out home-spun melodies infused with sordid lyrics about sexual misadventure and drinking, with the enthusiasm of a rambunctious Victorian gadabout on an absinthe binge. Unfortunately, *Sex, Drugs and Vaudeville* is a noble, but failed, attempt at capturing the intimacy of his gigs.

Although it's worth a listen, the crackly, vintage feel of the home-made recording doesn't measure up to the dark sweetness of his murder ballads and love-struck ditties. You'd be better off going to see him in the flesh. **Ciaran McCauley**

Off the mark, not off the wall ★★

Joe leads the rodents astray at alcoholics anonymous

Q+A

How did you record *Sex, Drugs And Vaudeville?*
I did it in my house, over a couple of months, gradually adding stuff at my own pace. It's my most personal recording so far. It isn't as aggressive as my other stuff, where I sang in a booming, Tom Waits-style voice. I wanted this album to have a live, intimate feel and to feature myself and one instrument only. I've also tried to make the comedy more obvious.

But your homage to 'Drunken Sailor' is much darker than the upbeat, original sea shanty...
That's true. When I play that song live I usually start by saying *'What do you do with a drunken sailor?'* and then people cheer and scream the words. But my version has different words; it's about one night stands and all sorts of other things, besides drinking. It should be a really jolly song, but it's not.

'The Stalker Song', which is on the album, is about *Bizarre*'s Alix Fox. Do we need to advise her to get a restraining order against you?
Nah, I wrote that ages ago as a thank you to Alix. After I was first featured in the magazine, and got to play at the Bizarre Ball, I started joking that I'd come to the office and stalk the mag team. I told Alix that I was going to go through her rubbish and chomp on her make-up wipes. But even though I only performed the song once after I wrote it, I realised it'd be worth recording on the new album.

Do you ever work with other artists?
Sometimes. For example, 'No Butts' is based on a song written by a mild-mannered but slightly eccentric person called Linda Robertson. She was married to a guy who was fixated with anal sex. I got in touch with her and asked if I could record a version of her song, and turn it into a ballad. She said 'Yes', and even came to one of my shows and sang it with me.

What's the sweetest song you've ever written?
'Soon I'm A Spinster'. It's about growing up, not caring about what people think about you, and acting as crazy as you like without giving a fuck.

What are your hopes for the album?
I'd like it to be Christmas Number One, because I want to throw Sir Cliff Richard off his throne. You know what? I'm gonna fuck Cliff Richard up. He's gonna get proper slapped about. I have a mean right palm and I'm going to slap that over-zealous son of a bitch right down. Cliff, if you're a secret *Bizarre* reader, I'm challenging you to Christmas Number One. It didn't happen last year, but it will this year. Sir Cliff, you're going down.

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BOOK OF THE MONTH BIZARRE

100 MONTHS

Rage against the dying of the light

JOHN HICKLENTON

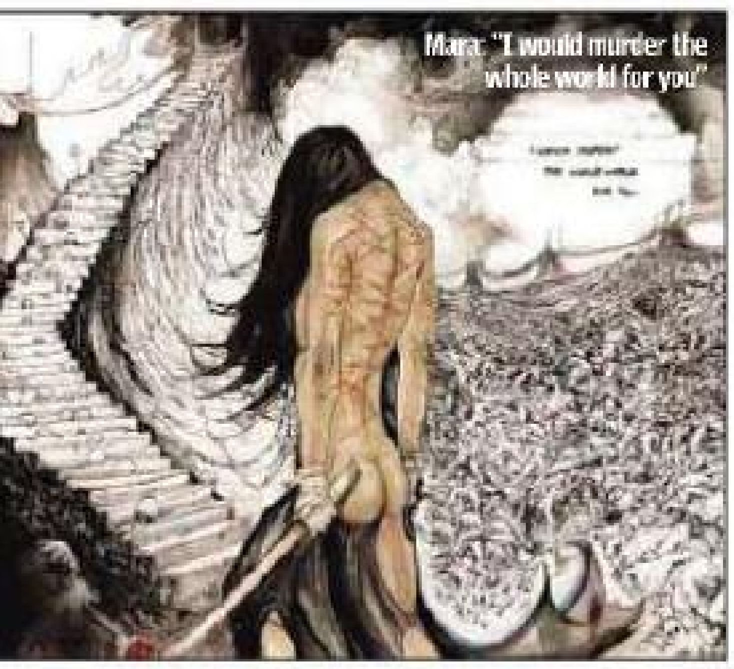
THE LATE comicbook artist John Hicklenton is best known for his work on *2000AD* and *Judge Dredd*, but *100 Months* will be his lasting legacy. Completed just before he took his own life at a Dignitas clinic in Switzerland – he'd been battling multiple sclerosis for 10 years – this graphic novel took a year to complete and is filled with deathly imaginings.

The story follows Satan's daughter, Mara, who's so brutal that the horned one has disowned her. After 100 months she leaves hell to wreak devastation on earth's people, who crucified The Carpenter and worship a creature called The Longpig. Mara rampages across cities and fields, confronting and killing everyone she finds.

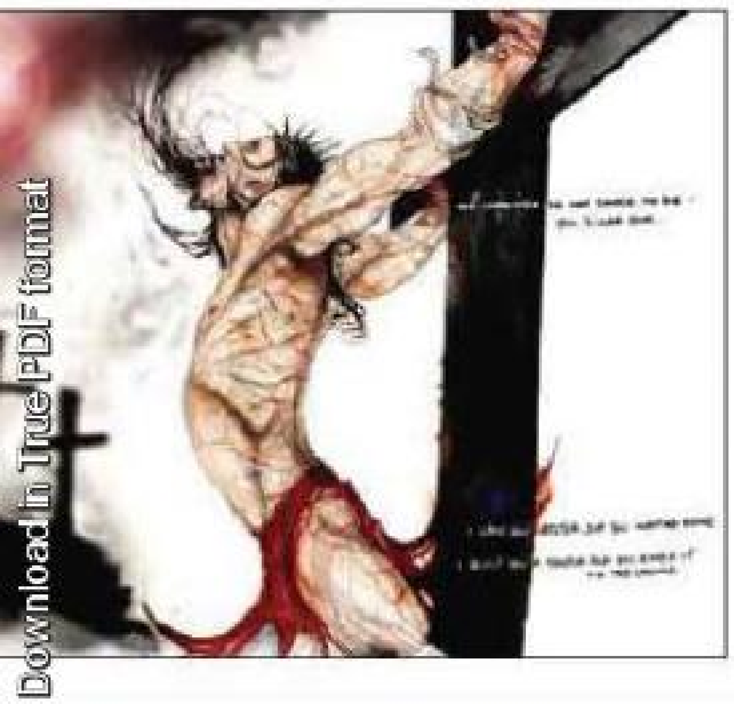
Hicklenton's illustrations are breathtaking. Mara has a man's muscles, yet feminine curves, and a curtain of hair often shields her hellish face. As she kills, the pages become a terrifying mess of blood, bone and sinew, culminating in a fight with the grotesque Longpig. The words are scrawled in the spaces between each full-page illustration, turning from black to crimson as the action intensifies.

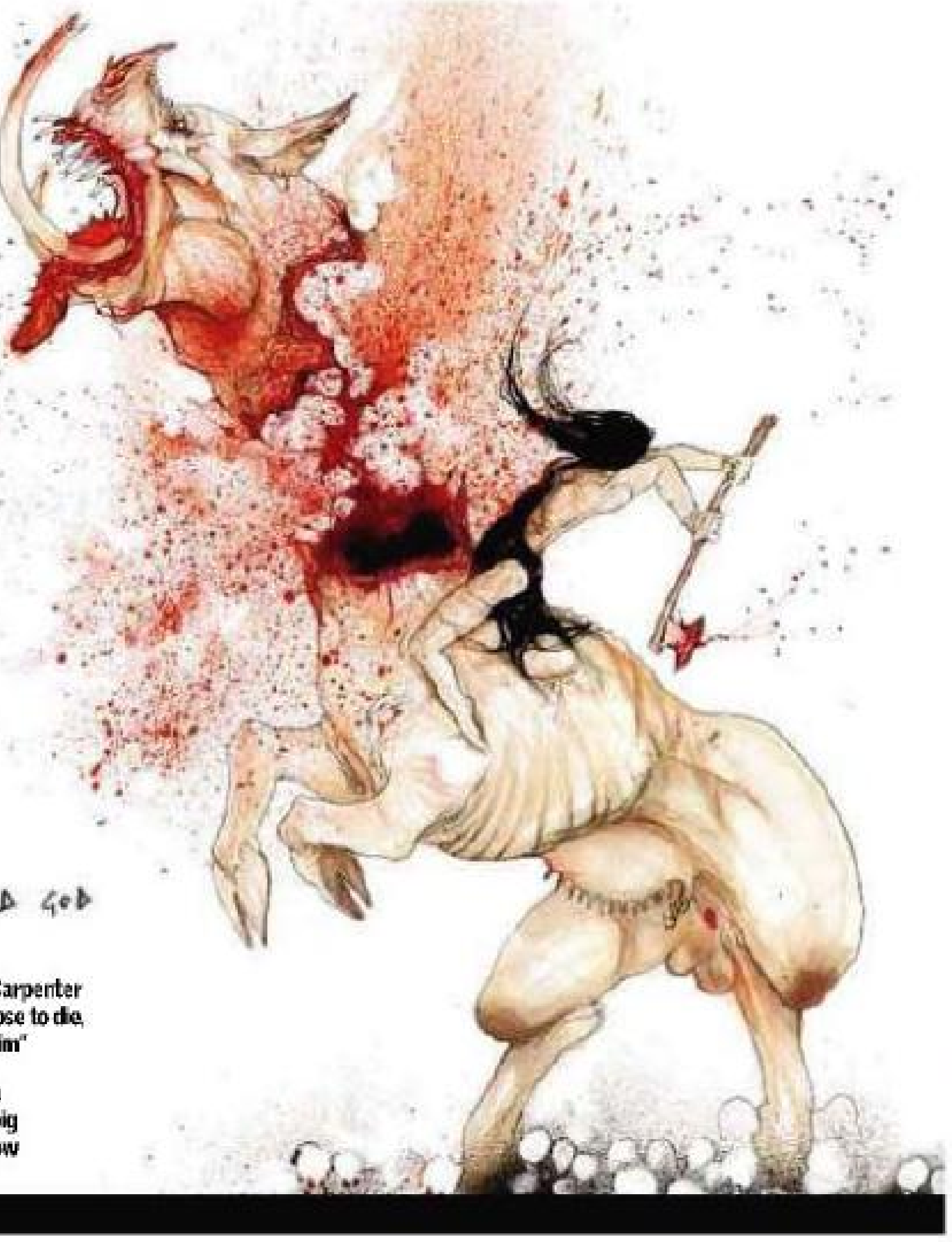
But for all its power, the deeper meaning of the story is unclear. Although Hicklenton's language mimics the Bible, he never says that The Carpenter is actually Jesus, and other words are rooted in Buddhism and Hinduism. It's also tempting to draw parallels between Mara's actions and Hicklenton's journey towards death, but without knowing his intentions it's difficult to speculate. Despite these ambiguities, the drawings alone are awe-inspiring, and you'll wonder at them time after time. **Eleanor Goodman**

Epic, blood-soaked and brave
★★★★★



Mara: "I would murder the whole world for you"



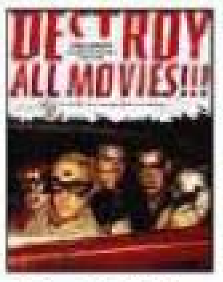


Left: "The Carpenter did not choose to die, you killed him"

Right: Mara deals Longpig the final blow

DESTROY ALL MOVIES!!!

ZACK CARLSON & BRYAN CONNOLLY



Although we baulked at the thought of ploughing through a book purporting to be 'the complete guide to punks on film', *Destroy All Movies!!!* is tremendous fun. Packed with crummy photos, outrageous artwork, hundreds of film reviews and interviews with key players in the punk scene, this is a great book to have close to hand when you're having a leisurely dump. Now *that's* punk rock. **DMcC** ★★★

EMBLEMS FROM THE PENTAGON'S BLACK WORLD

TREVOR PAGLEN

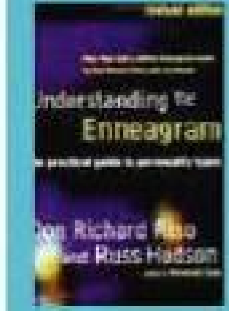
Silly cartoons and occult emblems have hidden meanings in this collection of shoulder patches worn by US black ops teams. A Grim Reaper patch was the sign of a secret stealth fighter program, a Minotaur signifies a still-classified program, and the unmanned aircraft 'Desert Prowler' program is symbolised by the cover art from Insane Clown Posse's *The Wraith: Shangri-La*. If you're fascinated by the Wikileaks cables, you'll love this. **EG** ★★★★★

My favourite book

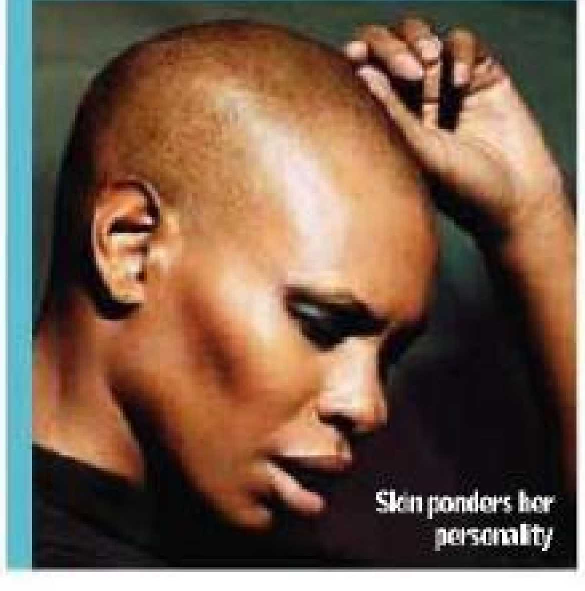
By Skin

Ass-kicking, shaven-headed Skunk Anansie frontwoman

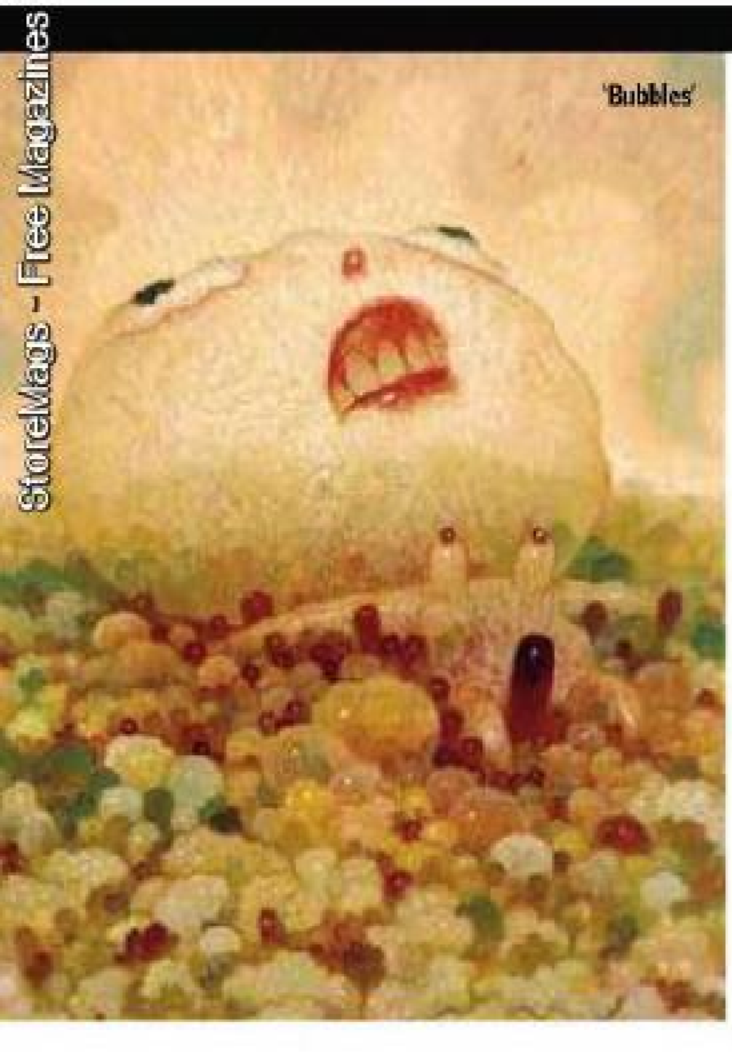
Understanding The Enneagram: The Practical Guide To Personality Types
DON RICHARD RISO AND RUSS HUDSON



"This book discusses a test that helps you work out what you're about, and how you interact with others. It puts people into nine basic categories, such as The Achievist, The Enthusiast, The Helper, and The Peacemaker, and then explores the good and evil sides of each and how they mesh and clash. I like to stay self-aware."



Skin ponders her personality



'Bubbles'

BENT

Forever blowing bubbles

DAVE COOPER

THE ODDEST THING about Dave Cooper's paintings is that, while they're always presented on flat canvases or reproduced in luscious art books, they always seems to be wobbling.

From flabby sunbathers in a farmer's field, whose voluminous arses and gelatinous thighs appear to quiver before your eyes, to translucent cars and limpid worms racing each other through a landscape trembling like jelly, Cooper's giddy illustrations refuse to stand still. They're a joy to pore over.

What *Bizarre* likes best, though, is that most of Cooper's illustrations have a dark side. While at first glimpse you might smile at the wide-eyed group of milky-skinned bubble-children cavorting in a meadow, look again and you'll see scaly creatures camouflaged in the undergrowth, whose sharp teeth come dangerously close to popping the globby moppets.

Charming, funny, and downright weird, *Bent* is the sort of book that'll sit comfortably under your dope-strewn coffee table, next to a half-eaten takeaway. **David McComb**

These paintings will twist your mind and make your tummy wobble with laughter
★★★★

EXPERIENCE SOME *REAL* PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

The man who foresaw 9/11 in a dream

The strange old woman who haunted a family's staircase

The man who woke to find a demon in his bedroom

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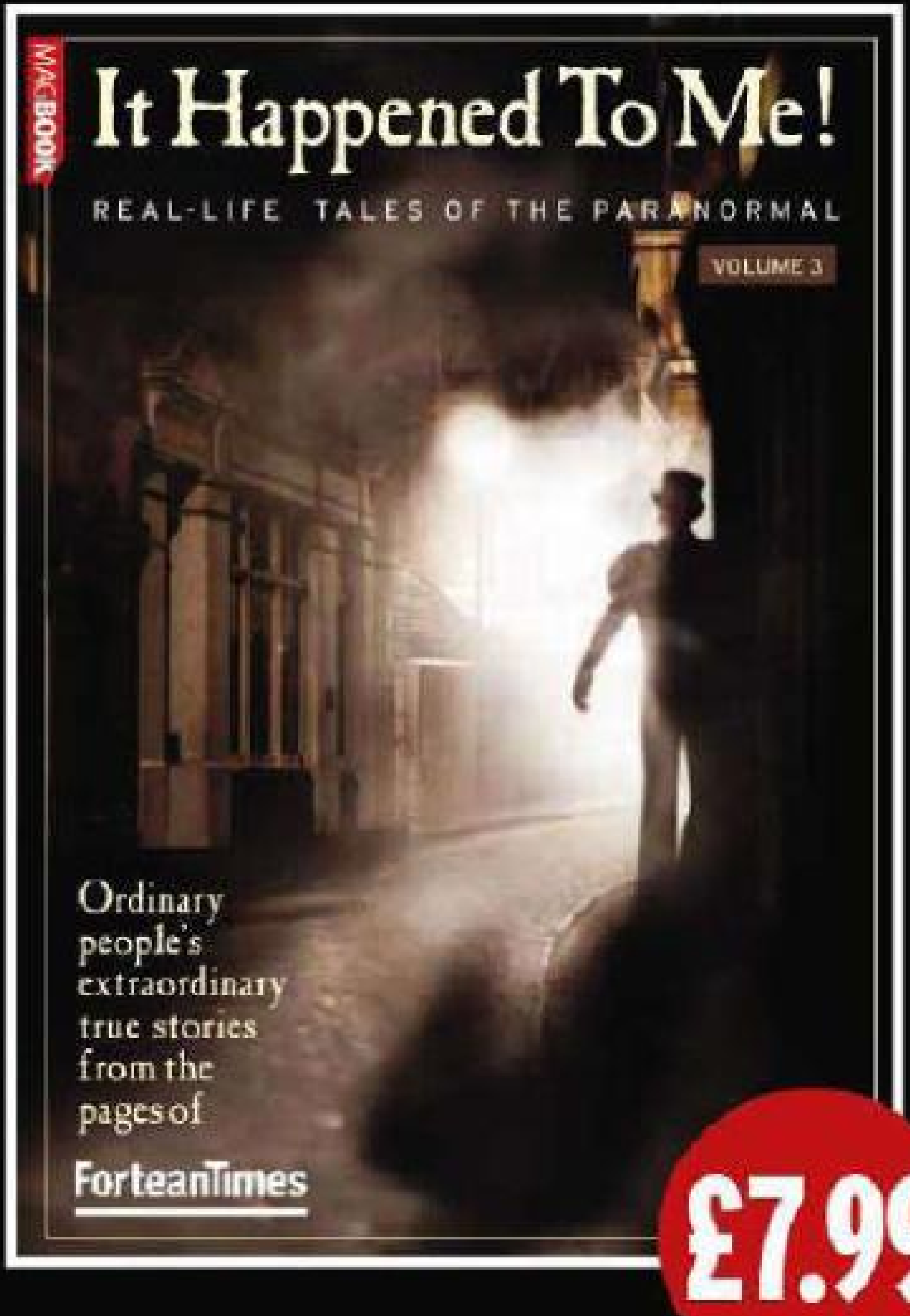
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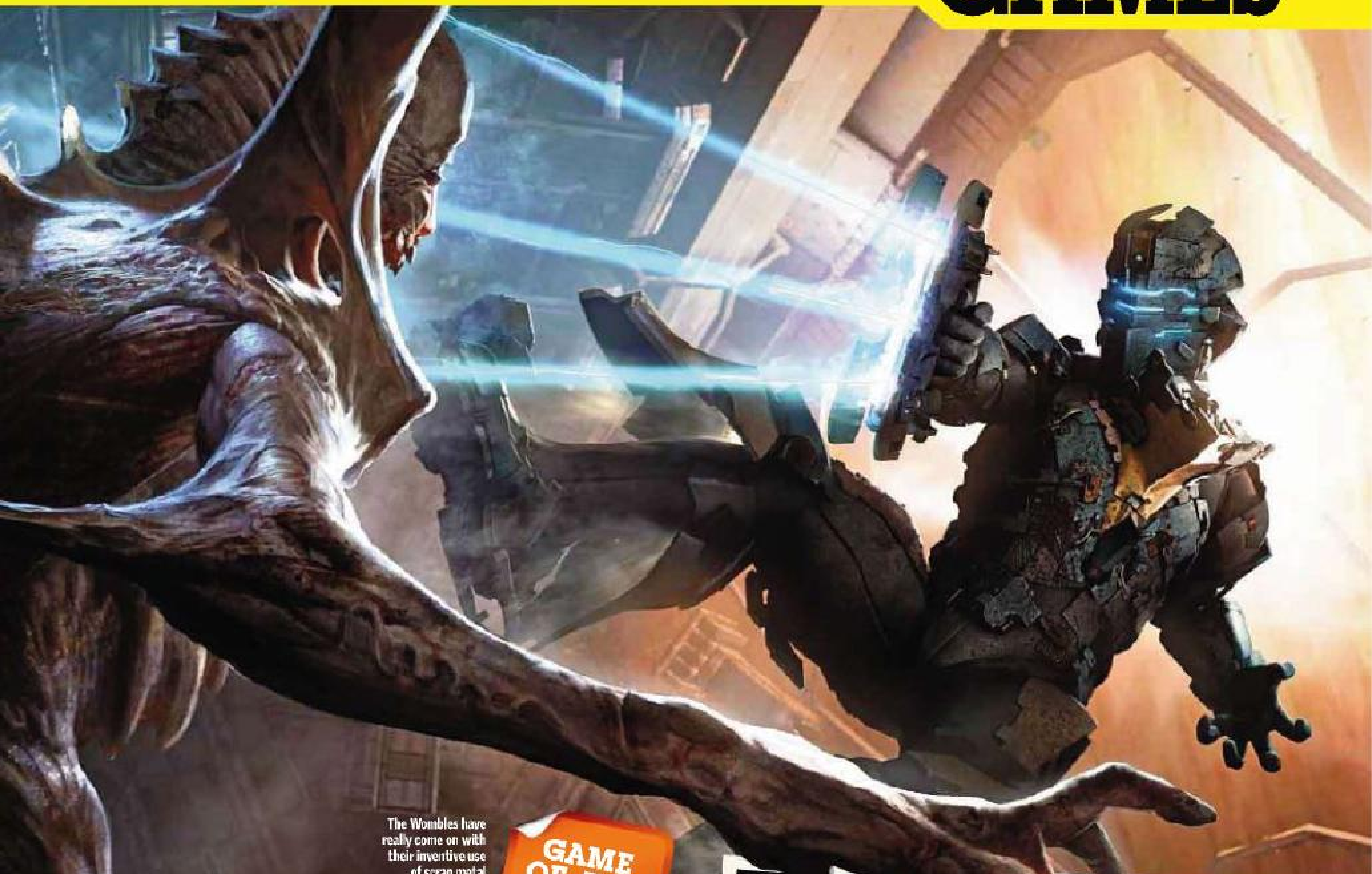


The Wombles have really come on with their inventive use of scrap metal

GAME OF THE MONTH BIZARRE

DEAD SPACE 2

Butcher that bald baby!

PS3, Xbox 360, PC

WHILE THE ORIGINAL *DEAD SPACE* played like a love letter to Ridley Scott's *Alien* – where half the scares came from the cloying claustrophobia of being trapped on a stricken space station crawling with unspeakable terrors – the bombastic sequel feels more like a homage to James Cameron's balls-out xenomorph frag-fest, *Aliens*.

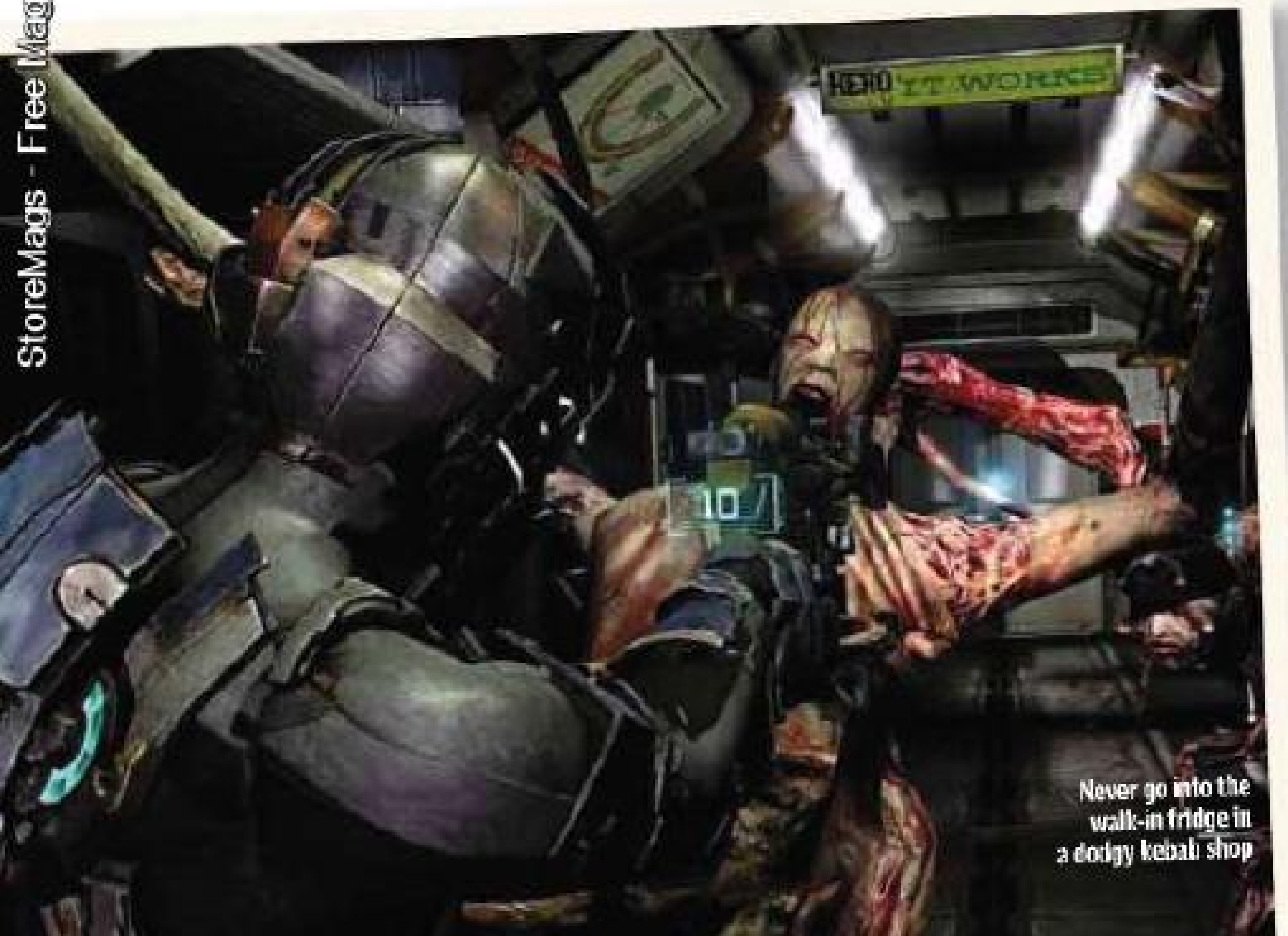
Staged in a huge interplanetary settlement known as The Sprawl, the gnawing loneliness and extreme isolation of the first game is gone, thrusting players into the heart of an unfolding tragedy, where space settlers are torn limb-from-limb by the reanimated corpses of their friends, rescue ships crash into each other in their haste to escape the carnage, and the plaintive cries of terrified colonists and abandoned babies echo through the steel corridors.

Like the original *Dead Space*, this game is as much about atmosphere as it is the dismemberment of monsters using brutal mining tools. Realistic shadows provide dingy hiding places for the aliens, nightmarish hallucinations of the mentally-disturbed hero make you question everything you see, and the fiendish mutants that lurk around every corner will haunt your nightmares long after you've switched off your console. Most distressing of all, though, are the squealing mobs of bald children that look like unholy midget Harry Hills as imagined by Francis Bacon, and which cluster around you in tight corridors, slashing at your spacesuit with razor-sharp claws.

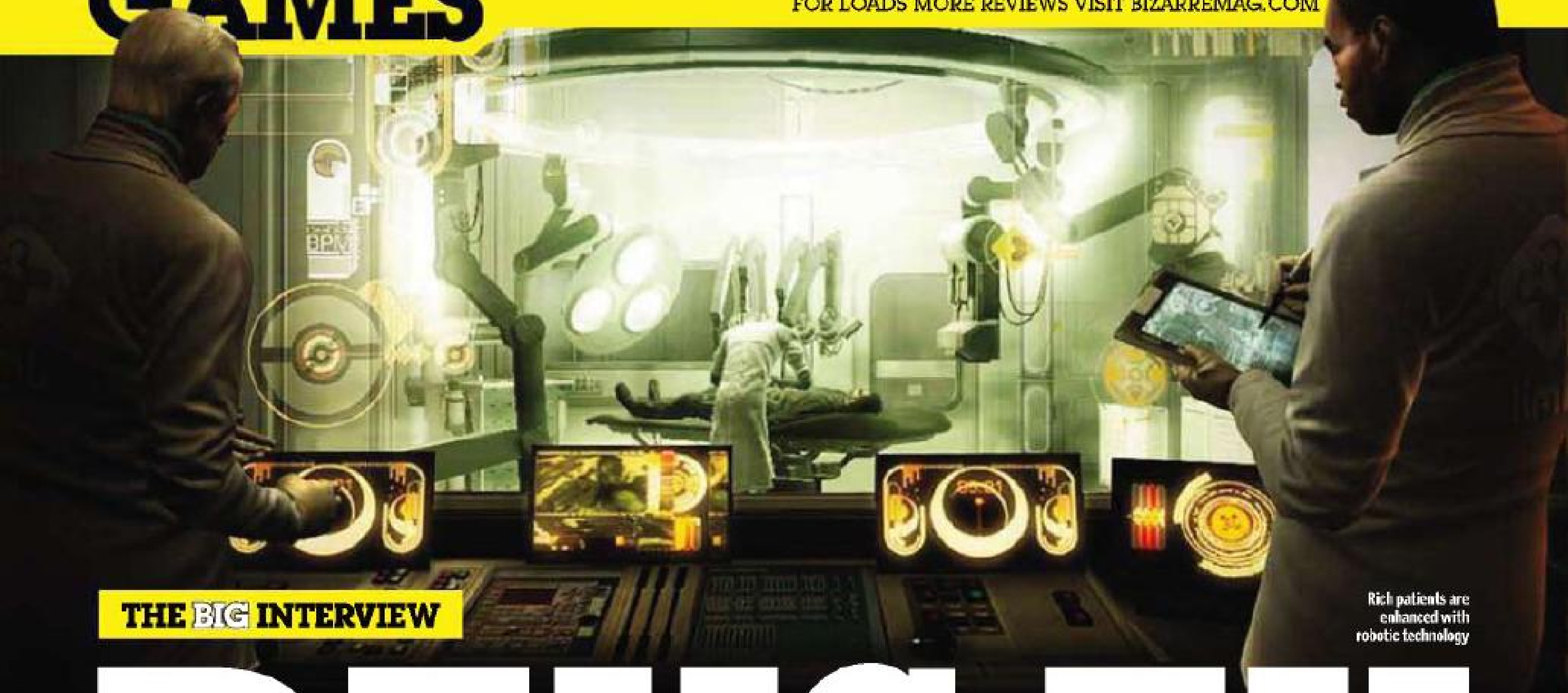
Harcore gun-nuts might by irked by the fact you need to be sparing with ammunition and can't just blast anything that moves and, as the action's so uncompromisingly tough, it'll frustrate anyone looking for a gentle bout of alien butchery. But for genuinely unnerving action delivered with style and a sharp sense of storytelling, *Dead Space 2* is hard to beat. **David McComb**

Deeply disturbing and soaked in gore, this is one of the finest sci-fi horror shockers around ★★★★★

The corpse got angry when it lost its favourite pair of gloves



Never go into the walk-in fridge in a dodgy kebab shop



Rich patients are enhanced with robotic technology

THE BIG INTERVIEW

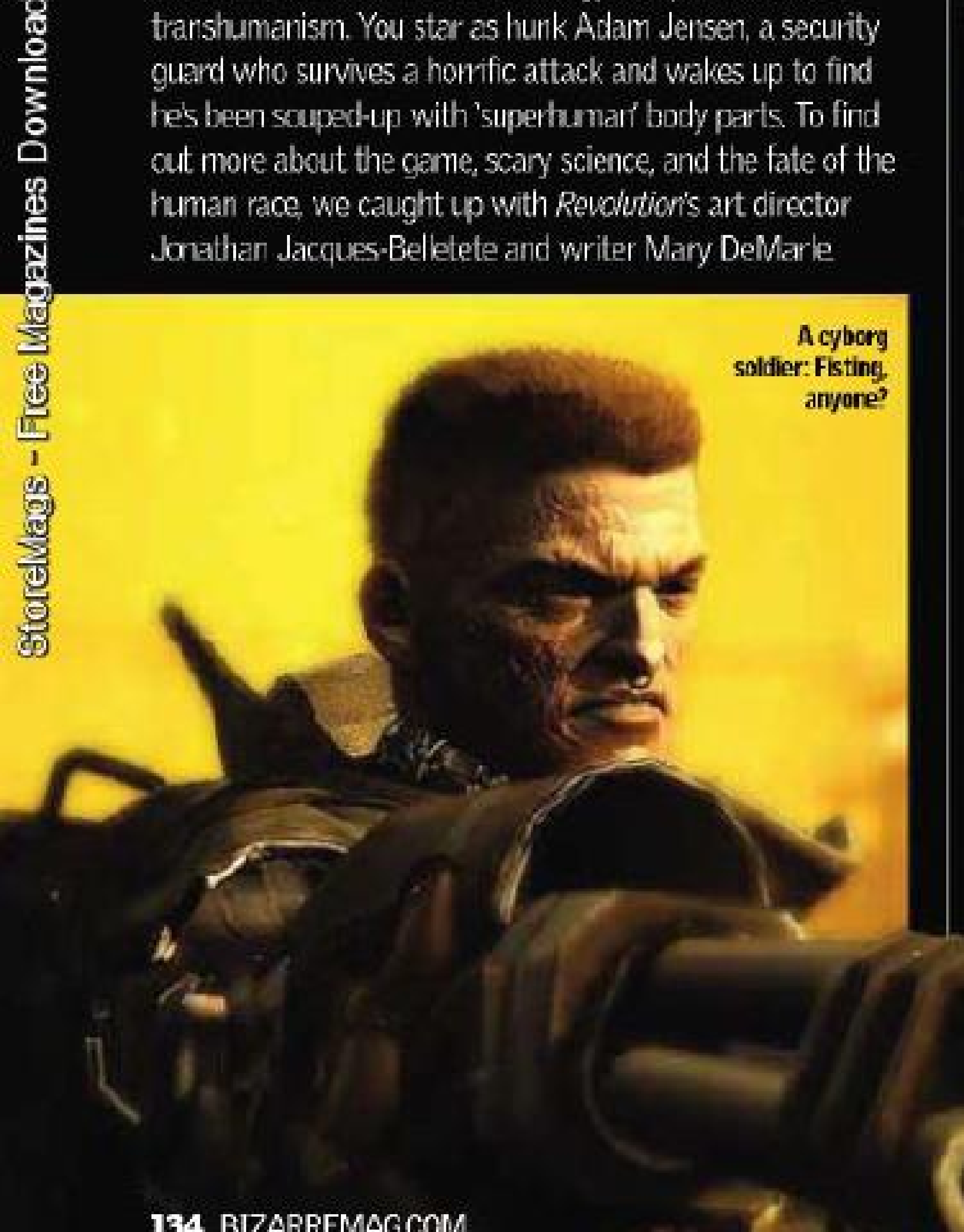
DEUS EX

HUMAN REVOLUTION

The makers of the killer sci-fi shooter talk real supermen and telekinetic monkeys

WORDS **STEPHEN DAULTREY**

HOLD ON TO YOUR THUMBS! MARCH SEES THE release of the latest *Deus Ex* role-player-cum-shooter videogame, *Human Revolution*. Like a cross between *Blade Runner* and *Terminator*, the third chapter in this series thrusts you into a dystopian future where humans enhance themselves with technology in a process called transhumanism. You star as hunk Adam Jensen, a security guard who survives a horrific attack and wakes up to find he's been souped-up with 'superhuman' body parts. To find out more about the game, scary science, and the fate of the human race, we caught up with *Revolution*'s art director Jonathan Jacques-Belletete and writer Mary DeMarle.



A cyborg soldier: Fisting, anyone?

Jonathan Jacques-Belletete

Art Director

Deus Ex: Human Revolution **is set around 15 years from now. Are we on the cusp of a cyberpunk era of enhanced human beings?**

I think we are. This is a new golden era of human evolution. We're taking control of our own evolution as opposed to letting nature do it. Transhumanism is real and it has begun.

There's bound to be an outcry from religious groups who say that humans shouldn't 'play God'. Is that issue explored in the game?

Sure, but the game doesn't just look at the religious debate, it also addresses the philosophical implications of having 'super-humans' in society. The game has rifts between rich people, who can afford to be stronger and faster, and the poor, who can't. It examines how the school system might change if pupils had hard drives in their brains and it looks at how to police a society filled with enhanced human beings. These philosophical discussions take centre stage, but we made sure we didn't create a heaven or hell scenario. It's up to players to decide what they think about transhumanism. But society *is* heading that way.

Which existing technology have you included in the game?

Technology that projects information at your eye, such as heads-up displays or virtual reality glasses. But we've developed the idea so that information in the game is generated directly in the character's brain via a chip or an implant, which is then relayed to their eyes, so that only they can see it.

It sounds very 'James Bond', except the gadgets are built into the body...

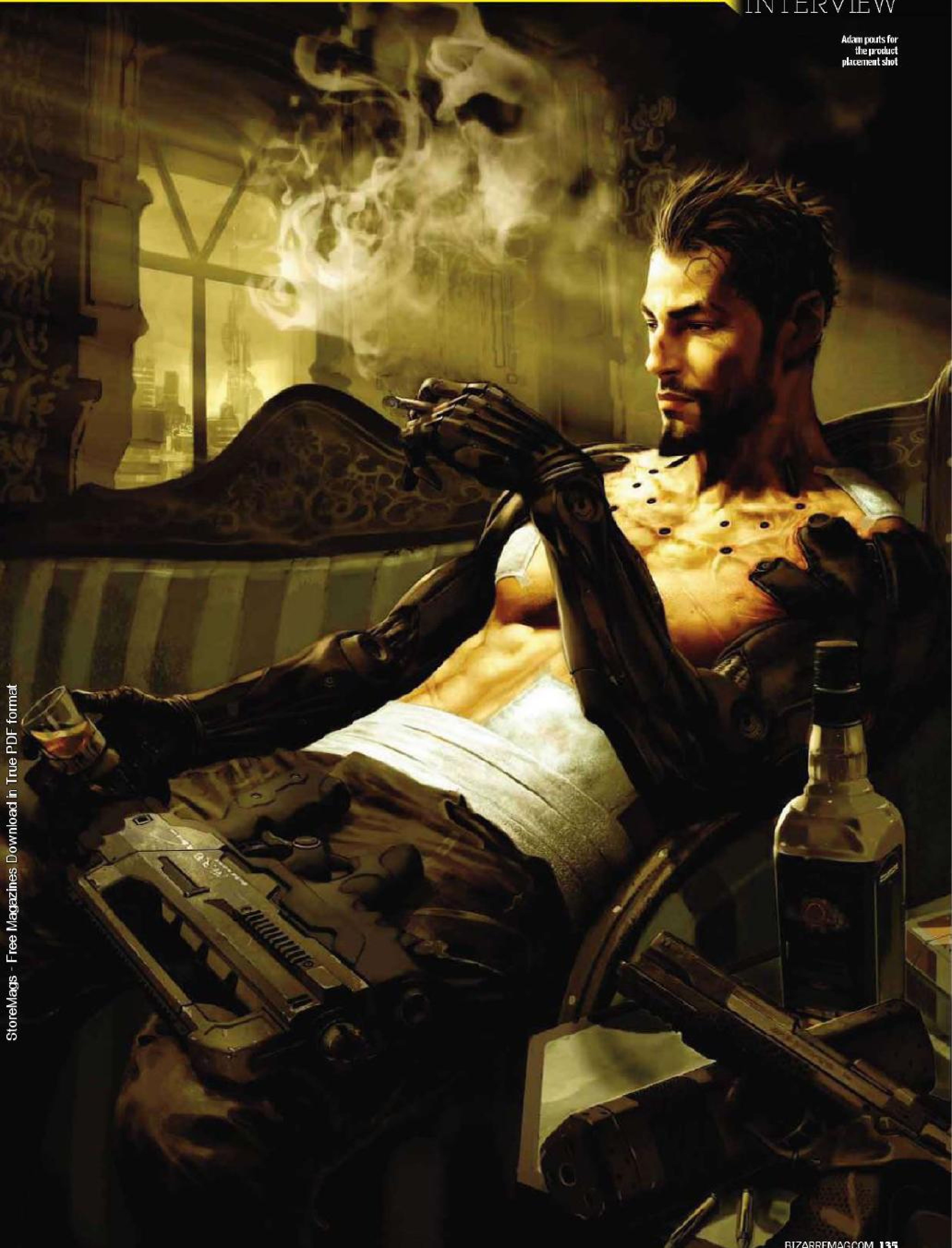
Exactly. Combat also has a huge role in the game, so players still get external weapons like guns and grenades, but many of them can now be integrated into Adam's body.

Where is transhumanist technology most obvious today?

In war. Huge sums have been invested in advanced amputee prosthetics since the Iraq and Afghan wars. Scientists are fast closing in on Luke Skywalker's replacement arm in *Star Wars*. In another 10 years people might want to cut their hands off to get mechanical ones.

That sounds terrifying. Do you think one day we'll have a breed of super-humans?

Oh, yes! It's crazy where things are going. Type 'DARPA' into Google, and you won't sleep for two months! It's the military research arm of the US government, and it has already highlighted the left/right functionality of the brain and has monkeys that can move robots with their thoughts. We're even at a point where paraplegic people can move cursors around computer screens and click on things just by using their minds. →



Adam pouts for the product placement shot

It began as an argument over who left the stinky plop in the toilet block

Mary DeMarle

Head writer

Are the body modifications in *Human Revolution* based on existing developments in technology, or your predictions for the future?

A bit of both. Almost all of the augmentations in the game were influenced by existing technology, although we took liberties and pushed some of the ideas a lot farther. There are seven different types of augmentations, based on where they can be implanted in the body: cranium, optic, arms, legs, subdermal, torso and back; and these relate to four character traits: stealth, combat, hacking and social.

You worked with US technology expert Will Rosellini. What did you learn from him?

Will Rosellini's company, MicroTransponder, is at the forefront of advanced prosthetics and human machine connections. Thanks to him, I know for sure that the US government has spent nearly $100m on trying to make an artificial arm that can integrate with a person's nervous system. If it's successful, the DARPA Revolutionising Prosthetics Program, as it's called, will allow amputee warriors in Iraq to have new, fully functioning arms.

In the *Human Revolution* trailer, Adam has a built-in 'gun arm'. Can scientists already integrate mechanics into human tissue?

There are currently millions of people who have batteries, wires, and electrodes inside them, for example, cochlear implants to help deaf people hear and pacemakers to regulate the heartbeat. There are also over 50 new technologies in clinical trials now that involve using electricity to control the nervous system.

Is this integration of mechanical technology into living tissue the future of enhanced beings?

Technically, transhumanism began when people first learned to live and hunt in groups, and created or mastered new technology. The wheel for example, enables us to go faster. However, the big change will occur when computer-based technologies can be merged with the body's nervous system.

So how long do you think it will be before we have our first breed of super-humans?

I agree with Will Rosellini when he says, "The first breed of super-humans is already here. Some people already use performance-enhancing drugs in sports. The improvement of implantable technologies will change the manner in which humans can be improved. However, the most important use is in enhancing patients suffering from neurological diseases so that they can function better." Ⓑ

Deus Ex: Human Revolution is out in March for Xbox 360, PS3 and PC

Behind Adam's fancy shades (left) lurks a hi-tech brain implant

WEIRD SCIENCE

The secret realities behind your new favourite game

Deus EX: Human Revolution is influenced by DARPA, which stands for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. It's part of the US Department of Defence that develops technology for the armed services. It's where man and machine merge, and their advances will blow your mind...

Testing the thought-controlled Modular Prosthetic limb

- Last year, DARPA awarded $34m (£22m) to a lab in Laurel, Maryland, to manage and develop the testing of its thought-controlled Modular Prosthetic Limb – a fake arm that can be controlled by an implant in the brain.

- In 2008, DARPA invested $3bn (£1.9bn) in a long-term project to create a 'Metabolically Dominant Soldier'. The idea is to meld man with machine, giving a person the speed of an Olympic sprinter, and the ability to crawl up walls and leap seven feet into the air.

- The department is exploring advanced gene therapy in an attempt to replicate the muscles of cheetahs and gorillas, enabling humans to run 45mph, and become 5-10 times stronger.

- DARPA's Brain-Machine Interface Program (BMI) is exploring the possibility of implanting modems into the human brain, enabling people to control battle robots and aeroplanes with their minds. The organisation has already got a monkey to control a robotic arm through similar means and put an electrode into a rat, which they used to steer the animal's movements by remote control.

Prince Harry watches a war vet drill using a mind-controlled prosthetic

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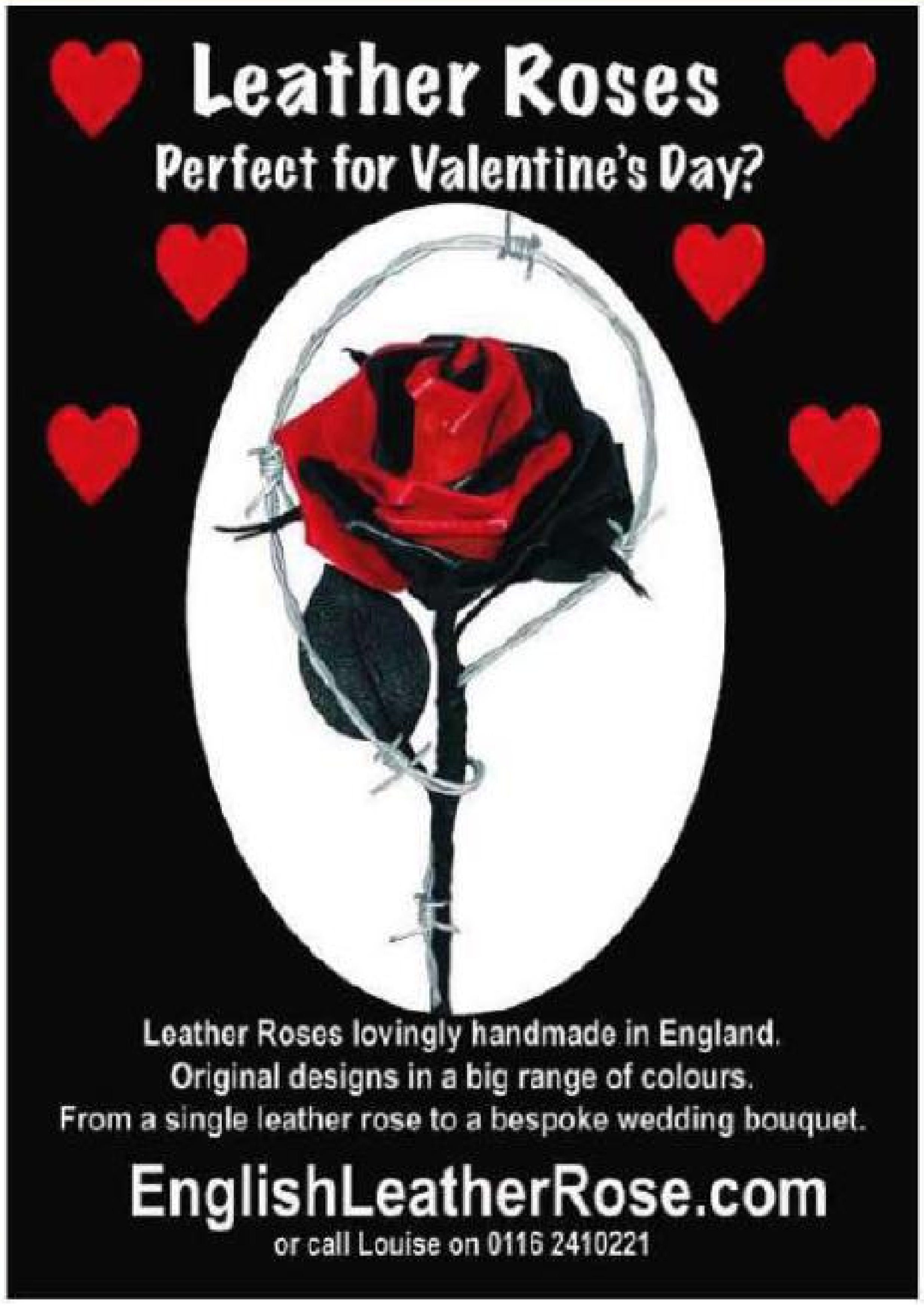
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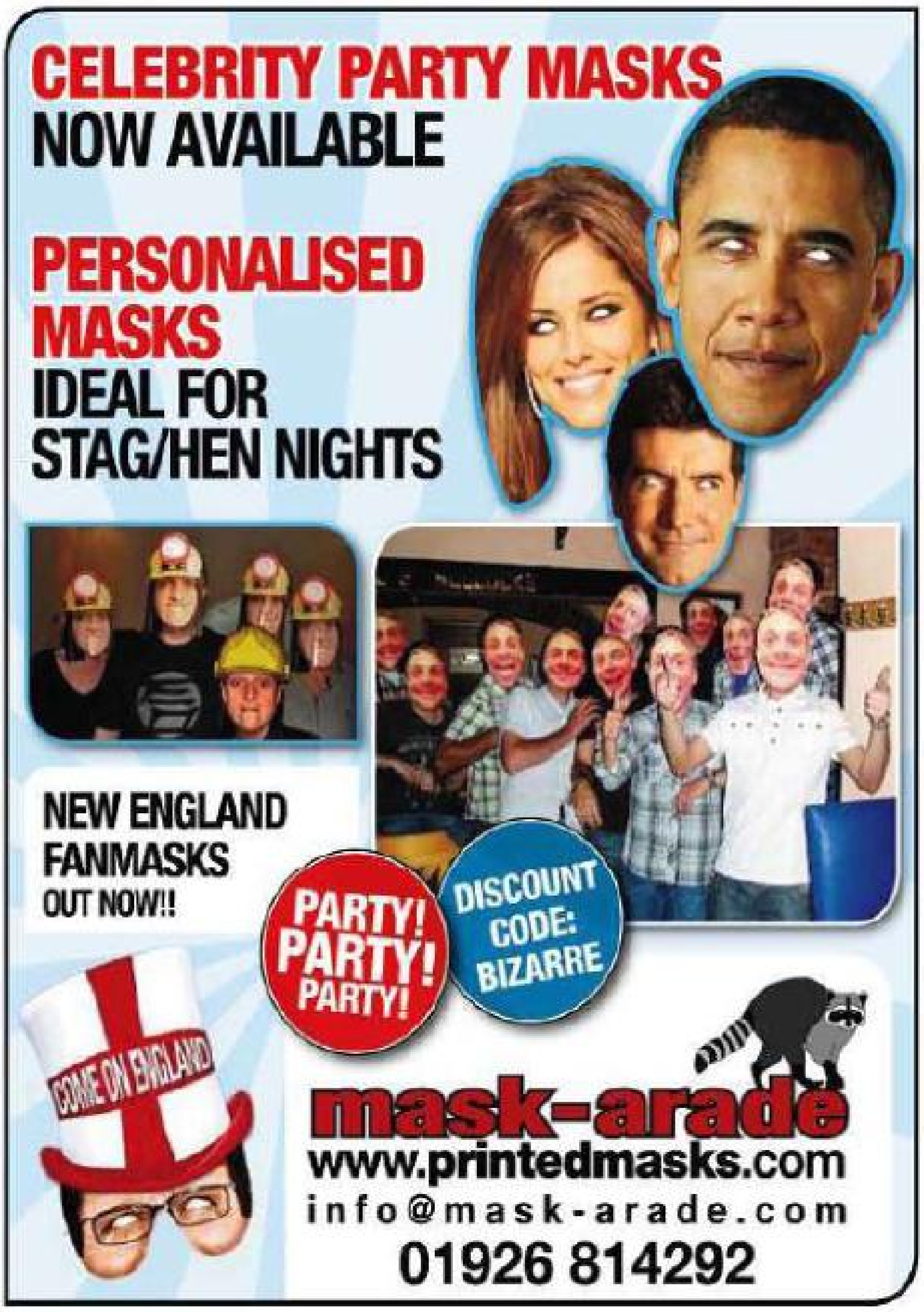
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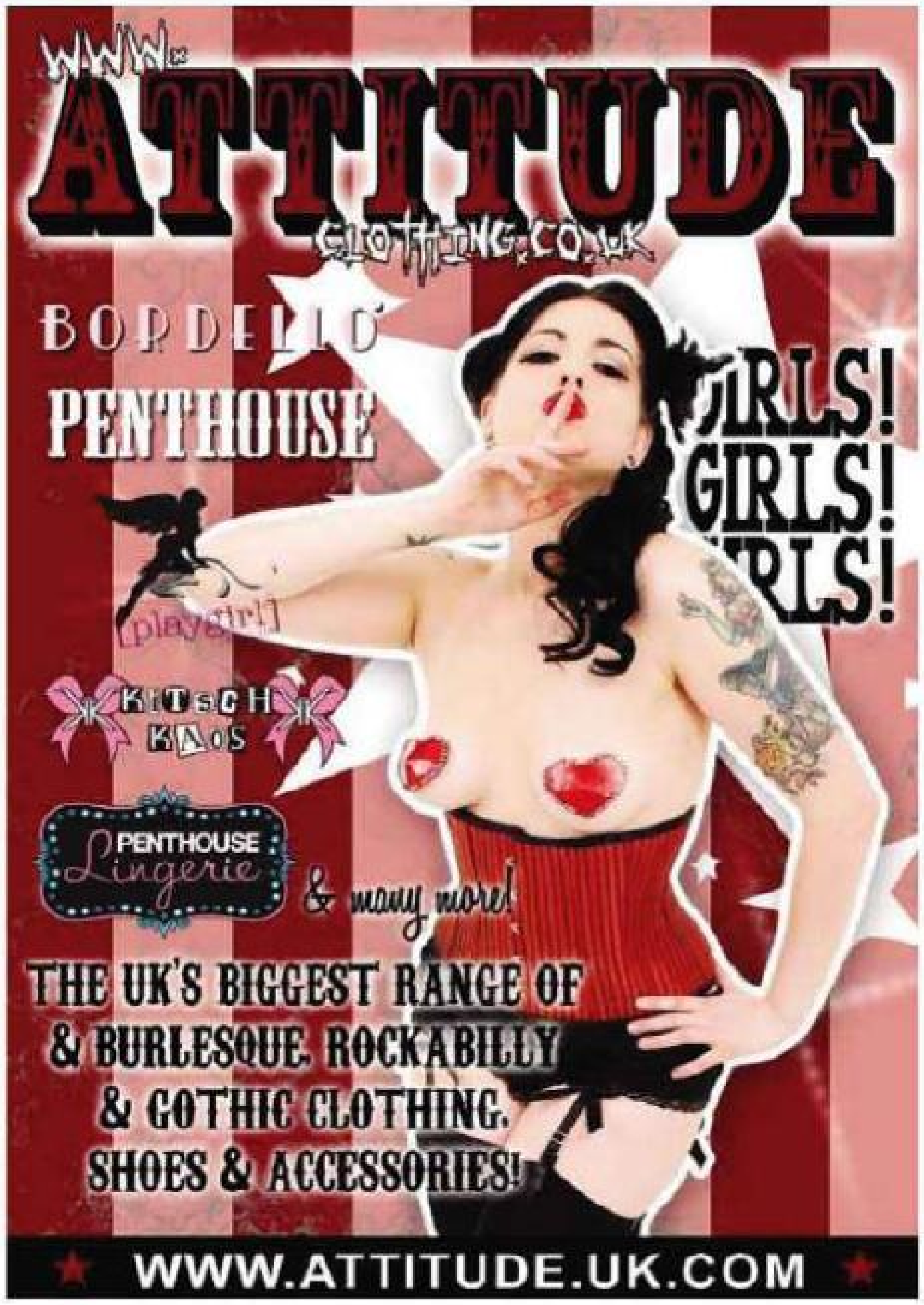
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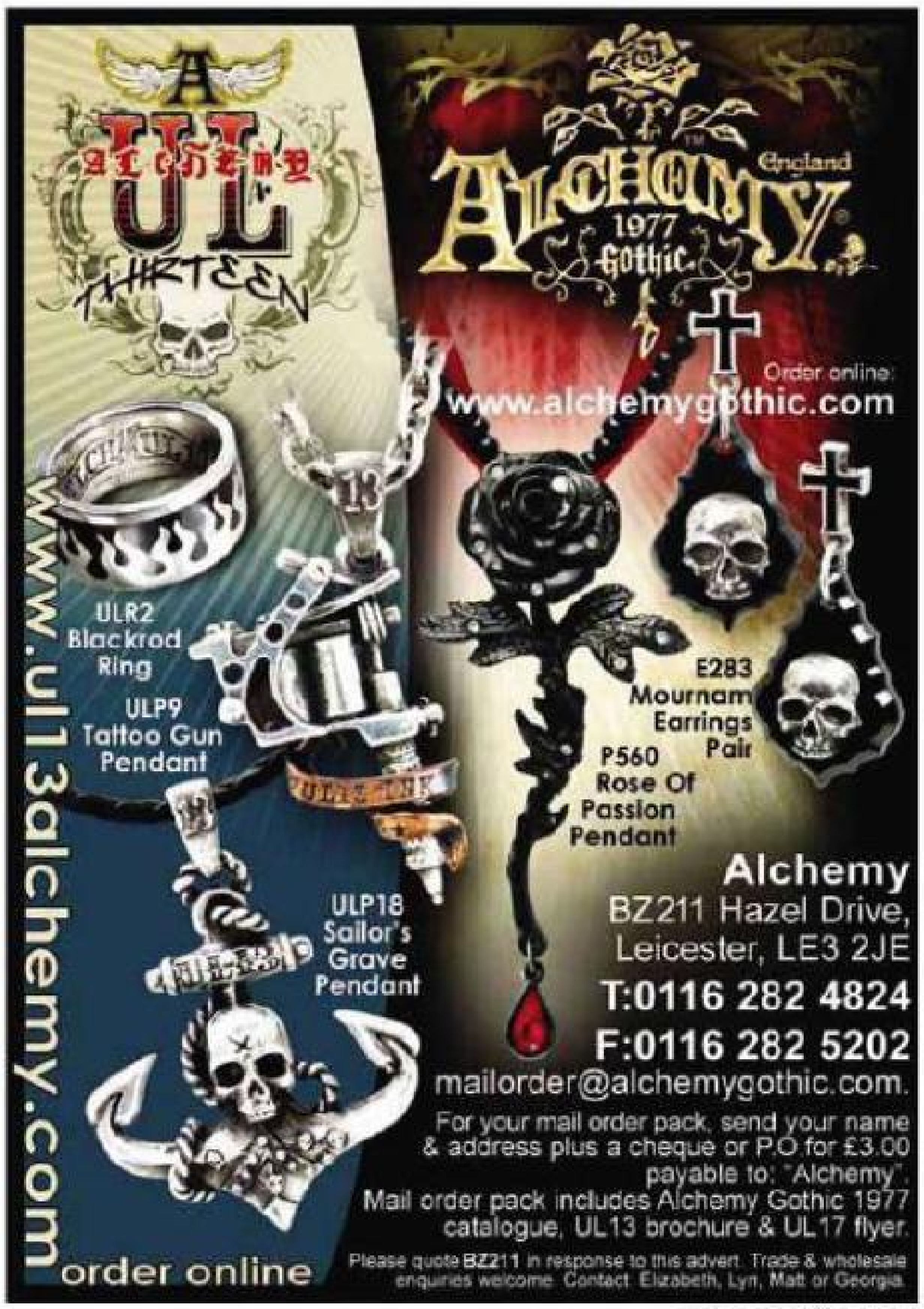
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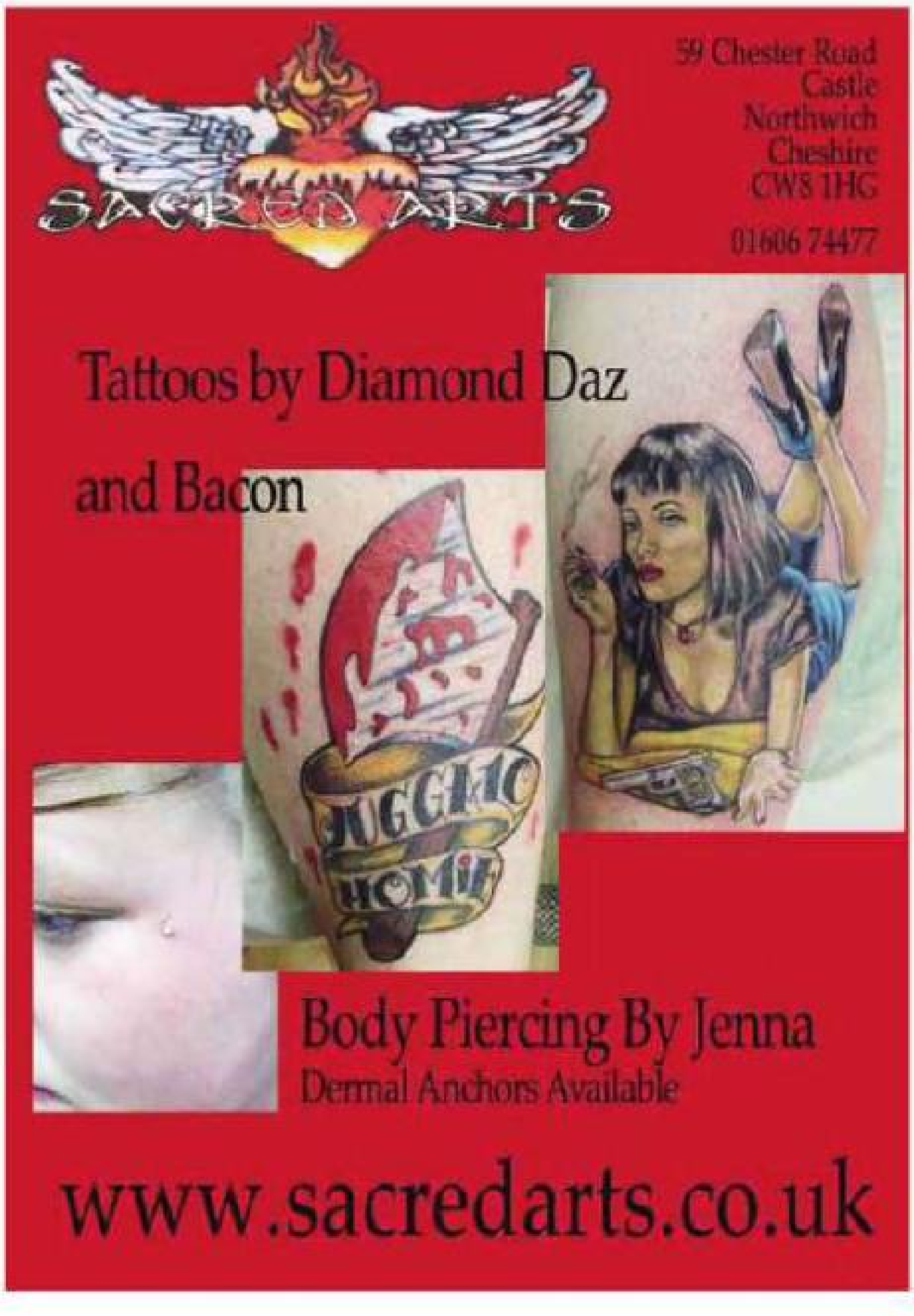

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45p/min

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